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African Bird Club

THE NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM
-6 AUG 1997
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Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 4 No 1 March 1997

Identification of Whydahs and Cuckoo Finch

Congo Bay Owl

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco

Identification of Sunbird Asities

Birding in Okapi Wildlife Reserve, north-east Zaire

Observations in the Comoros

Crested Honey Buzzard

ISSN 1352-481X

African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- develop a Conservation Research Fund

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Council
Gary Allport, Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Jacquie Bridges (Membership Secretary), Mark Cocker, Guy Eldridge, John Fanshawe, Lincoln Fishpool, Paul Green, Annie Harrap, Colin Humpage (Treasurer), Peter Lack, Duncan Macdonald, Bill Quantrill (Secretary), Geoff Randall (co-opted), Iain Robertson, Tony Stones, Richard Webb, Alan Wilkinson and Martin Woodcock (Chairman).

Bulletin Editorial Team
Mark Andrews, Phil Atkinson, Mark Cocker, John Fanshawe, Lincoln Fishpool, Peter Lack, Iain Robertson and Richard Webb.

Membership of the ABC

Membership of the ABC is open to all and costs, per annum, UK£12 *Individual*, UK£15 *Family*, UK£25 *Libraries/Institutions*, or UK£300 *Life*. Supplements are payable for airmail postage and non-sterling payments. To join or for further details please write to the Membership Secretary, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

ABC Web site

http://www.netlink.co.uk/users/aw/abchome.html

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The *Bulletin of the ABC* provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, preliminary expedition results, reviews and preliminary or interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the *Bulletin of the ABC* does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the *Bulletin of the ABC* and to any other publication.

Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa. Africa is here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened birds of Africa and related islands: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*, Part 1. Cambridge: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, eg Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, eg the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent referees, where appropriate. The material published is divided into *Papers, Short Notes, News & Comment, Discoveries, Reviews, Literature Gleanings, Recent Reports* and *Letters*. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two copies of contributions should be submitted. Typewritten manuscripts should have double-spaced lines, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. Clear handwritten manuscripts are also acceptable. All submissions will be acknowledged.

Contributions will be accepted in English or French: French summaries, as well as table and figure captions, will be printed for all major papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting major papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If possible, please submit your contribution on floppy disk and state computer (eg IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (eg Word, WordPerfect) used: please note that Amstrad PCW disks are not acceptable.

When you send your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (ie with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (eg 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Please always send two hard (printed) copies in addition.

Preferred names

With the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *Birds of Africa* Vols I-IV. For species not yet covered, please use appropriate regional handbooks and checklists eg Roberts for Southern Africa, Britton for East Africa. Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should, if possible, follow those on standard or readily available maps.

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Field identification of the brood-parasitic whydahs *Vidua* and Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*

Robert B. Payne

The whydahs *Vidua* and Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* are brood-parasitic finches that use other species of birds to rear their young. Whydahs use estrildid finches; Cuckoo Finch uses the grass-warblers *Prinia* and *Cisticola*. The whydah males in breeding plumage have long tails, the females are streaky brown birds, and the nestling plumage often closely resembles the host young. Most whydahs mimic the songs of their host species. The songs are helpful in identifying the species of paradise whydahs in West Africa, but the male breeding plumages are more distinctive; females also can be distinguished. Cuckoo Finches are not known to mimic host song. Males change from season to season due to wear in plumage from streaked dark brown to unstreaked yellowish above, females are similar to *Euplectes* bishops, and the young resemble the plumage of the host young.

Taxa – genus

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Field identification and status of the sunbird asities *Neodrepanis* of Madagascar

Frank Hawkins, Roger Safford, Will Duckworth and Mike Evans

The genus *Neodrepanis* is endemic to the eastern rainforests of Madagascar, and is now considered to belong in the subfamily Philepittinae (asities) of the family Eurylaimidae (broadbills). It comprises two species, Common Sunbird Asity *N. coruscans* and Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity *N. hypoxantha*. The two species are best distinguished by differences in plumage (especially for males in breeding plumage) and calls. Common Sunbird Asity is generally common in lower montane forest and is known from many sites. Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity occurs at higher altitudes, typically in upper, or sclerophyllous, montane forest.

Club News

ABC membership

By mid-December 1996 the Club had 1,091 members in 56 countries, including 28 African countries, compared with a 1995 total of 986 members.

If you have not already done so please re-subscribe for 1997 by completing and sending in the membership renewal form enclosed with the last bulletin. Please remember that you will receive no further bulletins until your renewal is received. Also, please note that to save postage costs credit card subscription payments will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.

ABC subscriptions payable in South African Rand

Council have agreed that for a trial period, ABC subscriptions, taken out in the current year (1997), can be paid in South African Rand. The following rates will apply:

Individal	R90
Family	R115
Life member	R2,300
Library/Institution	R190
Supporting member	R190 or R380

The club reserves the right to vary these rates in response to currency fluctuations.

For further details, please contact:
Deon Coetzee, PO Box 782937,
Sandton 2146, South Africa

Supporting Members Scheme

The supporting members scheme forms part of one the Club's key aims, to encourage the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables a potential African membership, which would not otherwise have the opportunity to contribute, to join the Club. At present, 23 African nationals have become supported members in this way, but we are keen to hear from other potential candidates.

The scheme is funded by supporting members who pay a minimum of UK£25 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund and covers the membership of an African member/s they may themselves have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

We hope that more members will agree to support this scheme. Although we have suggested a minimum figure of UK£25 to become a supporting member, any contribution would be welcome. Some people, rather than becoming supporting members, have simply paid directly for the subscription of their friends in Africa.

All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become supporting members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported membership. Candidates should be nationals of any African country, with a genuine interest (not necessarily scientific or academic) in birds, but without the resources to become members in their own right. Our supported membership at present includes post-graduate students, teachers, national park guides and civil servants, but anyone would be eligible for consideration. Those who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a suitable letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an office-holder in a local wildlife organisation.

Conservation fund update

The ABC Conservation Fund was launched in late 1996 at the Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Ghana.The Club intends to take a broad-based approach to bird conservation in Africa. While funds will be raised for dedicated conservation projects, we will also seek to support schemes that aid the development of a stronger birding community in Africa. We believe that birds will ultimately benefit from both types of action. Some of the projects intended for future development are listed here.

Expanding the circulation of the bulletin

We would like the bulletin to reach a wider audience in Africa, beyond our mainly individual African subscribers. Conservation funds will be used to place an allocation of about 100 copies where they can be read by many people. To minimise postage costs we would ask individuals and tour companies to help with distribution. Institutions qualifying for this scheme include libraries, conservation, non-governmental organisations with public-access resource centres, universities, museums, schools, game lodges and other public spaces used by birders and other wildlife enthusiasts. We welcome further suggestions.

Distributing books and other publications

The Club will work with publishers to subsidise the distribution of important field guides and reference works that might otherwise be unavailable in parts of Africa. We are especially keen to supply national parks and other key centres of birding activity, where such books will be used most effectively.

The international publishers HarperCollins have already kindly donated a number of the excellent *Illustrated Checklist to Birds of East Africa* by Ber Van Perlo and also the *Field Guide to Birds of West Africa* by Serle, Morel and Hartwig. These have been distributed by the Club to national parks in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana and Cameroon.

Often essential texts are prohibitively expensive for birders in Africa. Less costly publications on local birds and written in the regional language are a vital means of encouraging interest and often spread the word more effectively than highly detailed identification guides written in European languages. Many different published media will be considered:

- guides to the common birds of a country
- colouring books for school children
- pamphlets
- interpretation boards at nature reserves
- T-shirts bearing local or international conservation slogans.

African Bird Artist competition

The Club wishes to organise and run a competition aimed at young bird artists in Africa. The preliminary plans are to make an annual monetary award for illustrative work in black and white. However full details will follow in future bulletins and we are also keen to receive ideas from members.

The ABC conservation awards

ABC Council launched its conservation award scheme in November 1996 at the Pan-African Ornithological Congress in Ghana. An initial sum of UK£2,000 has been allocated to fund appropriate conservation projects. Proposals for funding are invited and details of how to apply can be found elsewhere in this bulletin. We aim to encourage as wide a range of ideas as possible. Single grants will not exceed UK£500 and are likely to be smaller.

Applications will have to fulfil the following criteria:

- The fund is open to African nationals only.
- The requested grant from ABC should be a substantial part of the proposed budget, ie contributions to very large projects will not be considered.
- Expeditions organised from outside Africa will not be considered unless the request comes from an African team member.
- Projects that are being carried out as part of normal academic study will not be considered.
- Projects which have a wide influence will be favoured.

Further details about the fund and also how to apply are available from: ABC Conservation Fund, African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 ONA, United Kingdom.

ABC representative scheme

The Club now has Representatives in 20 countries and has recently welcomed several new recruits. The full list includes:

Australia: Alan McBride, PO Box 190, Newport Beach, NSW 2106. Fax: 2 9973 2306. E-mail: mcbird@zip.com.au.
Belgium: Paul van Daele, Kazemattenstraat 30, 9000 Gent. Tel/fax: 9 223 6948. E-mail: pvdaele@uia.ua.ac.be.
Botswana: Chris Brewster, Matshekge Hill School, Private Bag 24, Bobonong. Tel 819272. Fax: 819344
Cameroon: O'Kah Ebwekoh Monya, Mount Cameroon Project, PO Box 437, Limbe.
Denmark: Lars Dinesen, Sjallandsgade 37, 3 tv., 2200 Copenhagen N. Tel/fax: 35 36 71 64. E-mail: regulus@inet.uni-c.dk.
Egypt: Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din, 3 Abdalla El Katib St. Apt. 3, Dokki, Cairo. Tel/Fax: 3608160. E-mail: 103257.1554@compuserve.com.
Ethiopia: Ato Yilma Dellelegn and Ato Mengistu Wondafrash, Ethiopian IBA Programme, Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, PO Box 60074, Addis Ababa.
Finland: Annika Forsten, Hantverkareg. 14 D 9, FIN-20100 Åbo. Tel. 40 5150510. E.mail: aforsten@aton.abo.fi.
Gabon: Patrice Christy, BP 2240, Libreville, Gabon. Fax: c/o ECOFAC, 775534.
Ghana: Samual Kofi Nyame, Ghana Wildlife Society, PO Box 13252, Accra.
Kenya: Colin Jackson, c/o Dept of Ornithology, National Museum of Kenya, PO Box 49658, Nairobi.
Magadascar: Frank Hawkins, World Wide Fund for Nature, BP 738, Antananarivo 101. Tel. 2 34885 (work), 2 31622 (home). E-mail: mesite@bow.dts.mg.
Namibia: Chris Hines, PO Box 22527, Windhoek, Namibia.
Seychelles: Rob and Vicki Lucking, BirdLife International, Fregate Island, PO Box 330, Victoria. Tel: 225655. Fax: 323126. E-mail: magrob@mail.seychelles.net.
South Africa: Deon Coetzee, PO Box 782937, Sandton, 2146. Tel: 082 490 1212. Fax 011 884 2739.
Steven Evans, PO Box 505, Ngodwana, 1209. Tel: 734 4973.
Tanzania: Maurus Msuha, PO Box 70919, Dar es Salaam.
The Gambia: Clive Barlow, The Atlantic Hotel, PO Box 296, Banjul. Fax: 227861.
Uganda: Prof Derek Pomeroy, Makerere University Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, PO Box 7298, Kampala.
USA (California): Joe Thompson, 4070 Sea View Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90065. E-mail: Jcthom1956@aol.com.
Zambia: Pete Leonard, Kafue Fisheries, Box 31522, Lusaka. Fax: 1 30128.

The representative scheme aims to support the ABC membership by providing a local point of contact in as many countries as possible. Representatives will answer queries to the Club, solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly arrange meetings for local members. ABC members are invited to contact their local representatives in the first instance with queries relating to the Club.

ABC Representatives will also help to recruit new members in their area, by distributing ABC posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, representatives will identify opportunities for allocating the ABC Conservation Fund and suggest candidates for the supported membership scheme.

If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your region and would like to consider the role of country representative, then please contact the Club at our postal address.

Pan-African Ornithological Congress

The ninth Pan-African Ornithological Congress took place in Accra, Ghana early in December 1996. Held once every four years, the event is a vital forum for ornithologists and conservationists to exchange information and ideas on various aspects of African ornithology. This year's congress provided one of the first opportunites for channelling the ABC Conservation Funds, which were used to sponsor the attendance of several African students. Altogether around 60 students received sponsorship from similar sources.

ABC was represented in Ghana by Martin and Barbara Woodcock, who made a great effort to publicise Club activities. Membership flyers and a bilingual leaflet about the ABC Conservation Fund were distributed with each delegate's congress pack. Posters and other presentation material were displayed and several new Club members were recruited. The ABC representative network was significantly extended with new recruits joining for Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

Special thanks are due to Club members Chris Bowden, Liz and Neil Baker, and Stan Davies for helping Martin and Barbara with their duties. The Congress proved a great opportunity for developing the Club and we are already looking forward to the tenth PAOC scheduled for Tunisia in 2000. (See *Africa Round-up* for more PAOC news.)

1996 British Birdwatching Fair

The annual British Birdwatching Fair, held at Rutland Water in Leicestershire from 16–18 August 1996, was attended by thousands of visitors and hundreds of exhibitors, including conservation organisations, booksellers, optical-equipment and wildlife-holiday companies. The funds raised from the event are designated for a BirdLife International project in Vietnam to preserve Ke Go Forest Nature Reserve for the critically endangered Vietnamese Pheasant, *Lophura hatinensis*.

This year the Club had a very attractive double stand which attracted numerous visitors. Twelve new members were recruited and a significant volume of Club merchandise was sold realising UK£1,300 profit. Special thanks are owed to Barbara Woodcock, who was co-opted onto Council specially to organise our Bird Fair stand, and also Club member Amberley Moore, who provided a great deal of help over the three days.

1997 British Birdwatching Fair

The 1997 British Birdwatching Fair is being held from 15–17 August 1997 (dates still to be confirmed at the time of writing) at Rutland Water, Leicestershire and ABC will once again be represented with a stand. If you visit the fair please do visit the ABC stand, which will have a full range of our Club merchandise and a selection of trip reports. As usual we expect the autumn bulletin to be printed in time for the fair and hope to be able to distribute these to visiting members to reduce postage costs.

ABC meetings

A joint meeting of the African Bird Club and the Norfolk Bird Club was held on 26 October 1996 in Blakeney Village Hall. An audience of around 70 people was treated to an absorbing presentation by Club member Peter Headland on wildlife photography in East Africa. We are grateful to Norfolk Bird Club for their help in organising this successful meeting, and also to Club Meetings Officer Annie Harrap.

There will be no spring meeting this year because of the Club's major involvement in the 'Birding around the World Conference', to be held at Swanwick Conference Centre, Derbyshire, England from 4–6 April 1997. Late bookings for this exciting event should be arranged through Sue Starling, World Birding Conference, c/o BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU (tel. +44 (0)1842 750050, fax +44 (0)1842 750030).

Council changes

Annie Harrap, who was a founder council member for ABC and has served as a one of the Club's officers for four years, stands down in 1997. Annie has put a great deal of work into ABC and was the first membership secretary at a time when the club was rapidly expanding. This made for a heavy work load and a considerable time commitment. The Club is very grateful to Annie for all her efforts and her valuable contribution over these formative years.

ABC Corporate Sponsorship

The Club is pleased to announce two further additions to the ABC Corporate Sponsorship scheme: Naturetrek and WildSounds.

ABC Corporate Sponsors contribute a minimum payment of £300 to ABC Conservation Fund, which entitles them to a number of benefits, including a full page advertisement in two bulletins during the five year term and the use of the Club's corporate sponsorship logo in adverts and stationery. Any company or individual with enquiries or suggestions about the scheme should please write to Tony Stones at the Club's address.

ABC Information Service

The Club is developing an information service to help members plan their birding activities in Africa. Announcements about this service will follow in future bulletins.

An important aspect of the service is to collect and distribute trip reports through the Club on behalf of its members. Trip reports are already available on Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, The Gambia, Uganda, as well as Wakkerstroom, South Africa and Usambara Mountains, Tanzania – see below for details.

However we would like to offer reports for more birding destinations in Africa, especially Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Please contact the Club if you have an African trip report you would like us to distribute on your behalf.

ABC sales items

The following Club merchandise is currently available.

1. ABC Polo shirt in forest green featuring an embroidered ABC logo and the words 'African Bird Club Working for Birds in Africa'. Available in small, medium, large and extra-large sizes: UK £12.50, airmail: UK£13.50.
2. ABC T-shirt in white featuring an Egyptian Plover illustration by Martin Woodcock. Available in medium size: UK£10, airmail: UK£11.
3. BOU T-shirt in grey or unbleached featuring Udzungwa Forest Partridge, Rufous-winged Sunbird and Bulo Burti Boubou: UK£11, airmail £12.
4. ABC caps in red, grey, blue or green featuring an ABC embroidered ABC logo: UK£5, airmail: UK£6.
5. ABC enamel badge featuring a Slender-billed Curlew design: UK£1.
6. ABC mug featuring a Carmine Bee-eater design: UK£5, airmail: UK£6.
7. ABC car and 'scope stickers: UK£1.
8. Cameroon trip report. Dec 1994–Jan 1995 by Richard Webb: UK£6, airmail: UK£7.
9. Ethiopia trip report. Dec 1995–Jan 1996 by Richard Webb: UK £7.50, airmail: UK£8.50.
10. Birding Ghana report. Feb 1996 by Mindy & Sherif Baha El Din: UK £6.50, airmail: UK£7.50.
11. Kenya trip report. Feb–Mar 1995 by Mike Hunter and Graham Speight: UK £8, airmail: UK£9.
12. The Gambia trip report. Dec 1992–Jan 1993 by Chris Gibbins: UK £5, airmail: UK£6.
13. Uganda trip report. June–August 1995 by Henk Hendriks: UK £6.50, airmail: UK£7.50.
14. Usambara Mountains, Tanzania. Jan–Feb 1996 by Eddie Williams: UK £4.50; airmail: UK£5.50.
15. Wakkerstroom (South Africa) Bird and Nature Guide. By Warwick and Michèle Tarboton: UK £6, airmail: UK£7.
16. Nightjar A4 colour prints by Martin Woodcock from *Bulletin of the ABC* 2.2: one print illustrates Mountain and Rwenzori Nightjars, the second depicts Black-shouldered and Fiery-necked Nightjars: UK£3.50 each.
17. White-winged Apalis A4 colour print by Nik Borrow from *Bulletin of the ABC* 2.2: signed and numbered limited edition of 50 at UK£10; also available unsigned at UK£5. Please add UK£0.50 postage and packing (UK£1 airmail) per order for artwork.
18. *Bulletin of the ABC*, volume 1, 1994, numbers 1 and 2: UK£5 each issue;UK£6 airmail.
19. *Bulletin of the ABC*, volume 2, 1995, numbers 1 and 2: UK £6 each issue; UK£7 airmail.
20. *Bulletin of the ABC*, volume 3, 1996, numbers 1 and 2: UK £7 each issue; UK£8 airmail.

Payments should be made in pounds sterling by cheque/postal order (payable to African Bird Club) or credit card. Full credit card details are required, please specify: Visa, Access, Mastercard or Eurocard; card number; cardholder's name (as it appears on card); cardholder's address; expiry date; cardholder's signature; and amount payable. Please be sure to specify your name and address and the full details of your order including quantity, with size and colour where applicable.

Please send your order to African Bird Club, c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, United Kingdom.

Concorde Car Hire in Kenya

Concorde Car Hire of Kenya has kindly agreed to provide a competitive car rental deal to African Bird Club members. Based in the Westlands suburb of Nairobi (about ten minutes taxi ride from the centre of town), Concorde can supply either two-wheel-drive (eg Nissan Sunny) or four-wheel- drive vehicles (Suzuki or Misubishi Pajero) vehicles. Westlands is also a major shopping centre in Nairobi with foreign exchange and other banking facilities, as well as a wide range of supermarkets, groceries, chemists, etc. Concorde will also arrange transfers to and from Jomo Kenyatta (the main international terminal) and Wilson (for some local flights) airports. People needing both two- and four-wheel-drive vehicles can arrange to switch part way through their itinerary. As well as catering for independent birding groups Concorde also regularly supply vehicles to wildlife film crews, and other professional groups where reliable transport is critical.

Drivers of Concorde cars must fall into the age group 23–70 and have had a full and clean driving licence for a minimum of two years. Since their cars are popular, it is recommended to provide Concorde with reasonable notice (the longer the better, especially for hire deals of two weeks and longer). Cars can also be arranged from a Concorde office in Mombasa. Because of inflation and currency fluctuations, no prices are listed here, but Concorde will provide quotes for any length of trip with discounted weekly rates, etc. Payments by credit card attract a small premium, but facilities for changing travellers cheques and UK Sterling or other currency are available within walking distance of the Concorde office.

Please note that the quality of the service they provide depends in part on clear instructions, so it is vital to plan itineraries carefully in advance. Despite the quality of their cars and back-up service, Concorde points out that it is still possible to fall foul of Kenya's roads, bogus mechanics (infamous in Nakuru), dirty fuel etc, and recommends some flexibility in itinerary arrangement.

For more details contact Mohez Karmali in Nairobi on telephone numbers + 254 2 448953 & 448954 and on fax number + 254 2 448135.

Invitation from California

Kurt Leuschner, a Club member in California, has generously invited visiting members to contact him if they want advice on birding in his area. Kurt can be contacted at: Desert Cities Bird Club, 70065 Sonora Road #267, Mountain Center, CA 92561, USA. Tel. +1 619 349 3515. Desert Cities Bird Club is located two and a half hours drive from Los Angeles, near Palm Springs and the Salton Sea, famous for desert and migrant species including Blue-footed Booby.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to BirdLife International for the continued use of their offices as a mailing address and for committee meetings, the British Trust of Ornithology for use of their offices for editorial meetings, and Alcedo Publishing of Colorado Springs, USA, and Crowes of Norfolk,UK, for their assistance in producing the bulletin.

Africa Round-up

General

Pan African Ornithological Congress

The Ninth PAOC took place as planned from the 1–9 December in Accra, Ghana. Hosted by the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), the meeting attracted approximately 250 delegates from 46 countries, including the largest ever representation from countries on the continent (from Morocco to South Africa, Senegal to Ethiopia). The Congress Chair, Professor Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, and her colleagues at GWS, frequently made light of the logistics involved (especially given the fact that Ghana's general elections took place on the last day of the conference!), but they deserve notable praise for organising a successful gathering.

Among many highlights were lively music and dance at the Opening Ceremony (a Ghanaian welcome which drew on traditional dances from all around the country) and at the banquet closing the conference which, to increasingly boisterous applause, was also overflown on a number of occasions by an obliging Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* — a lifer for some! The recently completed Accra International Conference Centre provided a fine location for the PAOC, with spacious meeting rooms, and excellent catering facilities. In fact Accra, proved a pleasant place to forage throughout, with lots of good restaurants and opportunities to sample national dishes like Beef Red-Red, Prawns Gari-Fortor, and Fanti-fanti with Fanti Kenkey Yam. Only a few unfortunates succumbed to Accra cha-cha.

Further afield on excursions, a large number of people were able to visit the forest at Kakum National Park (see David Moyer's account in *Bull ABC* 3(2): 105–112), and enjoyed vertigo-inducing excursions along the canopy walkway, as well as stunning birds like Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*, Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus coronatus* and Red-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus gulielmi*. Several people noted how tame the birds are, often coming too close for binoculars to be focused, and allowing sustained views. A must for those of us who missed out this time. In fact, one week attending the PAOC has simply whetted a lot of appetites for many more visits to Ghana.

Forming the meat of the PAOC three plenary lectures by Ron Ydenberg (The behavioural ecology of provisioning in birds), Theunis Piersma (The economics of bird migration) and Anders Pape Moller (Sexual selection and conservation: a Palearctic-African perspective). were among almost 100 presentations. Fascinating papers ranged from Audrey Msimanga's talk on the role of birds in the culture of the Ndebele people in Zimbabwe, to Steve Goodman's description of a new species of ground-roller (*Brachypteracias*) from the Holocene in Madagascar, and from Helen de Klerk's overview, Biodiversity of Africa: a study of congruence between major taxonomic groups, to tightly focused papers like Munir Virani's Home range and movement patterns of the Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus ireneae*. Munir's was one of an encouragingly large number of papers and posters which dealt with vulnerable species, sites and habitats (with forests and wetlands addressed in numerous presentations).

Conservation science was to the fore through much of the meeting. Talks combining data and process were especially welcome, including Oliver Nasirwa's lively description of the renaissance of waterbird counting, which is taking place in the Rift Valley lakes of Kenya (Oliver is the Count Co-ordinator based at the National Museums in Nairobi and now responsible for coping with some 500 volunteer counters!). Simultaneous French and English translation was provided throughout, a first for any PAOC, for which GWS were warmly congratulated. Extensive space was also available for poster presentations, and the poster hall became a focus for discussion. Indeed, it was the opportunity to debate with colleagues which many people most welcomed, and the corridors of the conference centre, the bars and restaurants of Accra were a hubbub of bird talk throughout the week.

After all the successful sessions, the PAOC closed on 7 December with a short ceremony addressed by the Vice Chancellor of the University at Legon in Accra, Professor Addae-Mensah; by Chris Gordon, who managed the Scientific Programme; by Michel Louette, the outgoing chairman of the PAOC Committee (PAOCC); and by Sam Kanyamibwa (the incoming chairman). In keeping with all the official events, speeches were short and to the point, but also provided an opportunity to announce that the next PAOC, the Tenth in 2000, will be held in Tunisia, hosted by Les Amis des Oiseaux. It will be the first time the congress has been held in North Africa and in a Francophone country. Nonie Coulthard (formerly Head of the Africa Division at BirdLife and a long time friend of Ghana) summed up with a vote of thanks, and echoed the feelings of everyone present that Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu and her GWS team had piloted us through a splendid week.

Contributed by John Fanshawe

BirdLife Day at PAOC

The PAOC organisers allowed one day of the meeting, 5 December, to be devoted to the BirdLife Partnership's work around the continent. After an opening introduction by the new Director and Chief Executive, Dr Michael Rands, which drew on examples from elsewhere in the partnership as well (notably Asia, where a similar meeting has just been held in Bangalore), and showed a video message from BirdLife's President, Queen Noor of Jordan. Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu then summed up the development of BirdLife's Partnership in Africa and touched on the major integrated conservation and development projects which are underway (in Cameroon's Bamenda Highlands forests, Kenya's Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and the Hadeija-Nguru Wetlands in Nigeria). After a morning tea-break, Leon Bennun summed up progress with the Important Bird Areas programme continent-wide, and Imed Esseti gave an account of the IBA process in Tunisia (including a lot of great slides of Tunisia's varied habitats from coast to wetland to desert). Over 100 copies of the BirdLife (ICBP/IUCN) *Threatened birds of Africa and related islands* (by Collar and Stuart) were distributed to African delegates attending the PAOC.

After a lengthy break for posters (fourteen national IBA programmes were presented), the meeting began again after lunch with a combined talk by Hazell Thompson and Roger Fotso on their work on the two *Picathartes* species. This included plenty of mesmerising slides of the legendary beasts themselves, but also a murky indistinct image that Hazell described as a typical picathartes researcher's eye-view – they are cave and cliff-nesting after all.

The rest of the afternoon was devoted to three presentations considering the consequences of recognising IBAs and how to conserve through site action (examples from Kilum and Ijim presented by David Thomas and Jerry Penn), building national NGOs (with Tilaye Nigussie using the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society as an example) and, lastly, through advocacy and policy development (with Aldo Berruti of BirdLife South Africa, formerly the Southern African Ornithological Society) and through ensuring a lasting influence on those slippery, shadowy people known as decision-makers.

Finally, five people shared their visions for the future of BirdLife in Africa (Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, Leon Bennun, Mike Rands, Hazell Thompson, Sam Kanyamibwa). A rewarding last half-hour, which is hard to sum up, but which told of a need to recognise the contributions good science can make to bird conservation, of the importance of birds as a focus for building an environmentally aware constituency in Africa, of the difficulties of making progress in countries which are torn apart by war and the many disenfranchised communities that are the inevitable consequences of war, and of the determination of a growing number of African NGOs, like the Ghana Wildlife Society, to provide leadership for the conservation movement in Africa, and share skills and provide commitment throughout the continent, and beyond.

Contributed by John Fanshawe

Southern Africa

Durban Exhibition to honour Philip Clancey in South Africa

Dr Philip Clancey is one of the fathers of African ornithology. He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1917 and studied at the Glasgow School of Art. He emigrated to South Africa in 1950 to take up the position of Curator of the Natal Museum. He became Director of the Durban Museum and Gallery in January 1952 and retired from this position in September 1982 after a lifetime's service to the people of Durban. One of his major contributions was the creation of the Bird and Mammal Halls, and he produced most of the artwork in the dioramas in what is now the Durban Natural Science Museum. These colourful, striking and scientifically accurate displays have fascinated and educated a generation of Durbanites, and thousands of other South Africans and foreign visitors over the years. Several million people have enjoyed these displays since their unveiling.

Dr Clancey is also a prodigious scientist. He amassed a collection of over 30,000 bird skins, largely gathered during more than 20 major expeditions to every corner of southern Africa, and now housed in the Durban Natural Science Museum. This collection is the third largest in Africa and is widely acclaimed as the best curated. It contains the finest collection of birds from Mozambique in existence. Dr Clancey has over 400 scientific publications to his credit, including more than ten major books. His contribution to ornithology was recognised by the University of Natal in 1981 when he was awarded an honorary doctorate. Dr Clancey was awarded the Gill Memorial Medal in 1972 in recognition of his outstanding work in avian taxonomy. He has been elected a Corresponding Member of the American Ornithologists' Union and has served as the President of the Southern African Ornithological Society (SAOS, now BirdLife South Africa). He was for many years the Chairman of the SAOS List Committee. Dr Clancey still resides in Durban and remains active in publishing scientific works as a Research Associate of the Natural Science Museum.

Few birders active today realise that Dr Clancey was the first to discover the presence of many birds in Southern Africa, for example the White-breasted Alethe *Alethe fuelleborni* and Olive-headed Weaver *Ploceus olivaceiceps*. He was responsible in 1960 for the first discovery of the Lemon-breasted Canary *Serinus citrinipectus*, previously unknown to science. Examples of Dr Clancey's taxonomic astuteness are the recent recognition of the White-winged Black Korhaan *Eupodotis afroides* as distinct from the Black Korhaan *E. afra* and the Spotted Prinia *Prinia hypoxantha* as distinct from the Karoo Prinia *Prinia maculosa*.

Dr Clancey's colourful bird paintings, always set against magnificent landscape backdrops, have illustrated numerous of his publications and those of other ornithologists (and include the Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* on the front cover of the East African journal, SCOPUS). In honour of Dr Clancey's lifetime contribution, the Durban Natural Science Museum (City Hall, Smith Street) will be presenting an exhibition of his artwork during March 1997. The exhibition will be launched at a function to be held at 17.00 hr on the afternoon of Friday 28 February 1997 in the Philip Clancey Bird Hall at the museum. For further information, please contact Michelle Kyd on telephone number + 27 31 300 6211 or by fax + 27 31 300 6302.

Contributed by Durban Natural Science Museum

Moves to save Blue Crane in South Africa

The national bird of South Africa, the Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradisea*, is facing extinction. In past decades this bird has been persecuted as an agricultural pest and has also suffered indirectly from the use of insecticides and removal of suitable habitat through agricultural expansion. Now only about 8,000 pairs are left in South Africa and a campaign has been launched to save this species from extinction.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust has started the rescue programme, which is backed by several large South African businesses. Funding has been obtained to buy satellite transmitters that will be attached to several birds in order to learn more about their movements and migrations. The EWT hopes that these measures, coupled with a five-year education programme, will stabilise and reverse the current decline.

Source: The Observer *18, August 1996, page 18*

SASOL sponsors crane education programme

The three crane species in South Africa, Grey Crowned *Balearica regulorum*, Blue *Anthropoides paradisea* and Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus* are all declining in numbers. Poisoning, habitat destruction, hunting, power-line and fence collisions, taking of chicks from the wild, drought in the 1980s have all contributed to the drop in numbers.

South African landowners have been identified as the target of an awareness programme. Cranes tend to have large territory sizes and long migration routes, which means that their conservation can not be adequately ensured through a network of reserves. The wetland and grassland habitats are the most important areas for cranes and their destruction through draining, flooding, erosion and water shortages is having a devastating effect on numbers.

The programme will focus on current landowners and will also be visiting schools to spread the word about crane conservation. SASOL has pledged 50,000 Rand which will go towards producing materials and funding the first of many education officers who will collect key information in key areas and spreading the word about cranes.

Source: Crane Call 10, p 3 and Endangered Wildlife *23, p 17*

Wattled Crane introduction in South Africa

The populations of Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus* in South Africa are so depleted that reintroduction is being attempted on the Velorenvallei Nature Reserve near Dullstroom. A method of rearing and releasing young cranes has been developed in the United States and has led to successful reintroduction of the Whooping Crane *Grus americana*. The method involves using crane puppets to avoid the chicks imprinting on humans. When the chicks grow larger, costumed 'mothers' are used to teach the birds to forage in their natural habitat and where to roost. This continues for the first three months of the chick's life and the support is slowly withdrawn after this initial period. The birds are encouraged to join up with flocks of wild birds which continue to teach the young birds.

A pilot project was set up in 1995 and a chick was raised, but was killed by a Caracal *Felis caracal* shortly after fledging. Predators are a major problem of release programmes and 'predator proofing' sessions will be carried out to make them more aware of their surroundings. This includes chasing and scaring chicks and teaching birds to roost in water from an early age.

The eggs for the Wattled Crane introduction come from second eggs collected in Natal by an Endangered Wildlife Trust researcher, which are then taken to be hatched at the Hlatikulu Crane Breeding Centre. The chicks are then taken to the release area and closely monitored.

Source: Crane Call *10, pp 5-6*

Latest news on the Blue Swallow in South Africa

The Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* is one of South Africa's rarest and most endangered birds. The population breeding from southern Zimbabwe to eastern Natal, *H. a. atrocaerulea*, is considered 'Vulnerable' and a survey in 1987 estimated that there are only 63 breeding pairs remaining in South Africa. This latter population is currently being studied by Steven Evans, who is aiming to unravel more of its ecology, so that more effective conservation measures can be taken.

In South Africa and Zimbabwe, Blue Swallows are restricted to the mountainous mist-belt grassland areas in the eastern halves of the countries. They breed at altitudes of 1,200–2,200 m and their preferred habitats are also unfortunately prime areas for forestry. Much of their suitable breeding habitat has now been lost because of commercial timber activities. Recent surveys have shown that the birds in South Africa number approximately 63 pairs, mostly concentrated in two areas: Kaapsche Hoop (10 pairs, 25 individuals) and four grass islands, totalling 1,400 ha, in the Graskop area (14–15 pairs).

Blue Swallows are hole-nesting and natural sink holes, abandoned mineshaft passages and even Aardvark burrows are all used. Breeding success seems to be very dependent on weather conditions and periods of five or more days of mist cause nests to be abandoned after the eggs become chilled. In the 1995/96 breeding season this accounted for 50 percent of egg loss and predation by Fiscal Shrikes *Lanius collaris* was also a major factor in egg and chick mortality. In total only four nests produced fledged young (8 percent of the number of eggs laid). This low productivity does not bode well for the expansion of an intra-African migrant such as the Blue Swallow.

Not only is forestry removing suitable habitat but introduced species are also invading the remaining grassland. Of particular concern is the spread of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, which covers much of the favoured feeding habitat. Bracken supports a lower diversity of flying insects, the swallows' main food, and the restoration of the natural vegetation in these areas may increase food availability. Bracken also occurs near the nest sites, and it is hoped that by removing it the females can forage more effectively closer to the nest, thus reducing the time spent away from her brood.

However, commercial forestry remains the greatest threat to the Blue Swallow and its long term future can only be assured by returning areas of forestry to the natural grassland state. Whether this can be achieved is unknown. The land may have been irrevocably changed by the introduction of forestry.

Source: Endangered Wildlife *Vol 22, p 22*

The Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is one of the widest ranging and active of all the conservation organisations in Africa. It was set up to conserve the diversity of species in southern Africa, and to maintain the overall biodiversity of the region. It also promotes sustainable management and use of species and habitats. It achieves these goals through a mixture of research, communication, education and conservation action. It has ten full-time and five part-time staff and is wholly funded through sponsorship.

It has a number of working groups to address specific problems. These include the Blue Swallow Working Group, the Highlands Crane Working Group, South African Crane Working Group, the Poison Working Group, the Raptor Conservation Group, the Vulture Study Group, the Wildlife Breeding Research Centre, the Carnivore Conservation group. It also provides a home for the South African National TRAFFIC office. The trust is involved with conservation of species across southern Africa, including Mozambique and Namibia. It produces a quarterly magazine, *Endangered Wildlife*, and also an annual report, *Vision*, which provides an overview of wildlife, ecotourism and the environment in the region.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust can be reached at EWT, The Gold Fields Environmental Centre, Johannesburg Zoological Gardens, Guateng Province, Republic of South Africa; fax (011) 486-1506; e-mail ewtsa@global.co.za. Further information can be found on its web pages at http://www.infoweb.co.za/enviro/ewt.htm.

Source: EWT web page

Eastern Red-footed Falcon
Falco amurensis
John Cox

Vulture Study Group is 21 years old

At 21 years old, the Vulture Study Group is the oldest working group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). The group carries out local monitoring, breeding and rehabilitation programmes and is also working on the reintroduction of the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus.*

The group has led the way in the study of vulture ecology and conservation and is to be congratulated on its achievements. Its members are extremely prolific having brought us the *Vultures of Africa*, the standard reference on the group, as well as other lesser known works and campaigns (outside South Africa) such as *Give à Bird a Bone, Vultures and Farmers* booklet, the Blouberg Vulture Project, *Vulture News* and *Gyps Snips*.

Source: Endangered Wildlife *Vol 22*

The Raptor Conservation Group

The Endangered Wildlife Trust hosts the Raptor Conservation Group, which is involved specifically with conservation programmes aimed at southern Africa's threatened birds of prey. The group's work is extremely widespread and varied and includes many different projects, including education programmes, surveys, ecotourism and awareness campaigns using local and national media.

Some current projects include:

1. setting up surveys of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* and Eastern Red-footed Falcons *F. amurensis* and Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* across the region;
2. the Forest Raptor Project in Nelspruit, which will produce a management plan and ethical code for raptor-friendly management of forestry in South Africa;
3. the Free State Raptor Project, which is a provincial campaign to provide education about raptors.

The group also produces two publications, its newsletter *Talon Talk* and a scientific journal, the *Journal of African Raptor Biology* (formerly *Gabar*). Communication is a key part of its work and the Lagamed Raptor and Vulture Awareness Programme reaches more than 80,000 people directly each year. Its radio programmes have audiences of 5,000,000 people and a variety of articles are published in magazines and journals, including farming magazines.

Source: Endangered Wildlife *Vol 22, p 21*

Flamingos in trouble in southern Africa

Declines of over 40 percent have been seen in the Greater *Phoenicopterus ruber* and Lesser Flamingo *P. minor* populations in southern Africa over the past 15 years. These birds regularly breed at only two sites, Etosha Pan in northern Namibia and Makagadikgadi Pan in Botswana. The breeding success is such that the adult birds are not replacing themselves. At Etosha, the pan tends to dry out and the chicks starve. There have only been three major breeding events in the past 40 years. Wetland birds are one of the most threatened groups in Africa and many of their habitats are being drained, polluted or mined for soda ash.

As Namibia supports 84 percent of the Greater Flamingo and 93 percent of the Lesser Flamingo populations in southern Africa, conservation attempts should be targeted in this country. Simple but effective management techniques, such as those used in Europe, could be used to help increase rate at which new birds are recruited to the population.

Source: Conservation Biology *10(2), pp 504-514*

Longlining – southern African seabirds on the hook again

Longline fisheries, particularly those for the Southern Bluefin Tuna *Thunnus maccoyi*, have been shown to be directly responsible for the global decline of Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* populations in the last three decades. Worldwide more than 107,900,000 hooks were set each year between 1981–86 just by the Japanese Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery. Bycatch rates suggest that anything from 38,000 to 173,000 seabirds could be dying annually, and Wandering Albatrosses are not the only victims.

In South African waters it has become apparent that an average of 3–6 White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis* die every time a Hake *Merluccius* spp longline is baited. About 9 million hooks are set annually, killing some 4,000 White-chinned Petrels each year. These figures make South Africa's Hake longline fishery the global leader in the mortality of White-chinned Petrel. However, bycatch estimates are still conservative, since the numbers of birds killed by the foreign tuna fleet (120 vessels) and the Patagonian toothfish fleet (16–21 vessels [estimate]) have not been taken into account because of the absence of data.

White-chinned Petrels breed in burrows and are notoriously difficult to census, making the detection of trends in their numbers all but impossible. However, some workers have already shown dramatic local decreases in White-chinned Petrel breeding colonies, and the birds have almost disappeared from Prydz Bay waters in Antarctica. Precipitous negative trends such as these are a grave cause for concern and require urgent action.

The World Wide Fund for Nature in South Africa and the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology are currently assessing a suite of mitigating measures to be used by the local longline fleet in order to reduce current bycatch rates. Also, in co-operation with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Services, an educational booklet aimed at the fishing community will be distributed in due course in an attempt to reduce the numbers of White-chinned Petrel deaths in South African waters.

Furthermore, a recent development of unprecedented concern is the establishment of a Patagonian Toothfish *Dissostichus eleginoides* longline fishery around the South African owned sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands. No fewer than twenty eight seabird species breed at the Prince Edward Islands; among subantarctic islands only the Crozet Islands boast more species of breeding seabirds. The Prince Edward Islands support approximately 2,500,000 pairs of breeding seabirds and could support up to eight million seabirds in total. The islands are home to 20 percent of the global population of the recently split race of Wandering Albatross, the globally threatened Snowy Albatross *Diomedea chionoptera*. The Prince Edward Islands also host at least three other populations of near-threatened species, 12 percent of the world's Grey-headed Albatrosses *D. chrysostoma*, 23 percent of the Sooty Albatrosses *Phoebeteria fusca* and 5 percent of the Northern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli*.

Recent studies of the Patagonian Toothfish fishery off South Georgia (UK) have revealed that seabird by-catch rates are potentially higher than those recorded for the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery off Tasmania. Already, unprecedented records of Gentoo Penguins *Pygoscelis papua*, a species not known to be caught on longlines, have been hooked off the Prince Edwards. The fact that this species is an inshore forager confirms that illegal longlining operations within the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone are taking place.

Factors which make the Prince Edward Island fishery particularly threatening is that there is little enforcement of South African fisheries or CCAMLR regulations. Despite South African Sea Fisheries Research Institute recommendations that only four toothfish permits be issued, researchers and informers have reported that a larger fleet of at least 19 vessels are already operating in the area illegally. To make matters worse, not all of the five licensed vessels are carrying bird scaring lines or independent observers on board, which is part of their permit requirements (as well as being international obligations to CCAMLR).

In September 1996, four poachers were caught in Prince Edward waters contravening South African and CCAMLR regulations. However, no immediate action was taken against these vessels. Unless the appropriate mitigation measures are enforced, there is grave concern for the well-being of seabird populations on the islands. Research programmes to monitor numbers of seabirds breeding at the islands are being conducted by the Percy FitzPatrick Institute and Sea Fisheries Research Institute, but given the greater mortality of young birds, and the lack of effective policing of the fishery, it may be impossible to avert a catastrophe.

Contributed by K. Barnes, C. Boix and P. Ryan. Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7700, Cape Town, South Africa

Okavango delta threat

One of our members, Roger Hawker in Botswana, has drawn our attention to a proposal by the Namibian government to extract water from the Kavango river, to cater for the increasing water needs of Windhoek. Such a scheme could seriously threaten the flow of water to the Okavango delta, an area of major importance both to wildlife and to the local population in Botswana.

It looked as though the decision was going to be pushed through but the decision has been postponed for two years while a full impact assessment is carried out. If members would like to register their concern, letters can be sent to the Namibian and Botswanan governments.

Contributed by Roger Hawker & Botswana Bird Club

Namibia Bird Club bulletin

After a long absence an issue of *Lanioturdus*, the bulletin of the Namibian Bird Club, has recently been produced. The latest issue includes articles on the Namibian Nest Record Scheme, Birds of the Gam resettlement area and also a children's writing competition! The bulletin is not a scientific journal and is aimed as a discussion forum about aspects of Namibian birds and birding. The new editor, Chris Hines, is always looking for articles for future bulletins and articles on any aspect of Namibian birds will be welcome. Annotated checklists, site guides, accounts of birding holidays in Namibia, short field notes, breeding observations, reviews, identification articles, and children's writing and drawings are all welcome. Articles can be in English, German or Afrikaans and sent to The Editor *LANIOTURDUS*, Namibia Bird Club, P.O. Box 22527, Windhoek, Namibia.

Contributed by Chris Hines

Why is the Jackass stripy?

Sea birds tend to be very uniform in colour and most birds are either grey, white, black or brown and tend to be darker above and lighter below. There are several evolutionary reasons for this as discussed by Peter Ryan in a fascinating article on the evolution of plumage in the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*. The Jackass, unlike other African penguins, has bold stripes on the breast and the side of the head making the bird very obvious. Like other penguins in the genus *Spheniscus*, Jackass Penguins feed on pelagic schooling fish such as Pilchards *Sardinops ocellata* and Anchovies *Engraulis japonicus*. Other penguins feed on crustaceans, squid and non-schooling fish. The stripy plumage is thought to 'panic' the birds' prey, making individual fish form a tight shoal as a predator response. This tight shoaling makes the chances of catching a fish much greater.

Source: Africa — Birds and Birding *1(3), 44-50*

Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*
Simon Mustoe

Conservation fund in Zimbabwe

Over 1,400,000 tourists visited Zimbabwe in 1995 making up 6.6 percent of the country's GDP. Most tourists visiting the country are ecotourists and to date much of the money spent by tourists has not been returned directly to conservation. A national park conservation fund has recently been set up so that all money earned by the parks is returned directly to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. The fund is part of a World Bank plan to reorganise the department so that it is run more efficiently and profitably. It is to be hoped that wildlife conservation will benefit.

Source: Africa Wildlife Update, *June 1996, p 4*

Richard Brooke (1930–1996)

Richard Brooke died peacefully in May 1996 in Harare after a long illness. He was born in India, educated in England and Rhodes University in Grahamstown (reading Classics) and then joined the Rhodesian (as it then was) Civil Service until 1971, when he became a full time research ornithologist, initially based in Zimbabwe but later at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology in Cape Town, South Africa.

His main ornithological claim to fame is as an authority on the swifts (Apodidae) but he also researched and wrote prolifically on many other topics. Despite a very heavy workload, he was always very willing to help others in their researches and his broad knowledge about many subjects made him something of a guru who brought an air of broad scholarship into the scientific atmosphere. He always managed to find answers and many times these were fascinating and extended well beyond the initial query.

An eccentric in the best sense of that much maligned word, Richard will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Adapted from Peter Steyn's tribute published in Africa — Birds & Birding *1(3), p 15*

Mozambique Bird Atlas

The Mozambique Bird Atlas is a continuation of the Southern African Bird Atlas Project and was launched as a new project in December 1994. As mentioned in previous *Africa Round-ups*, the atlas aims to produce a maps of bird distributions based on a quarter degree grid and also to produce an estimate of abundance. Fieldwork is initially being concentrated in the southern third of Mozambique and the aim is to produce an atlas based on these data in 1998 and a complete bird atlas by 2006. Compared with South Africa, there are few birders in Mozambique although, with the formation of the Mozambique Bird Club, it is hoped to address this balance. Visiting birders can therefore make a real contribution to the knowledge of the birds of this country and records are welcome. Records can be sent to Vincent Parker, Fundação Natureza en Perigo, Av. 25 de Setembro 1514, PO Box 4203, Maputo. Tel (258-1) 424832. Fax (258-1) 422434.

Source: Endangered Wildlife *24, pp 40-41, September 1996*

Visiting Mozambique?

The Mozambique Bird Club is appealing for donations of bird guides and binoculars for use by club members. If you have any old binoculars or unneeded 'Roberts' or 'Newmans' and are visiting Mozambique this newly formed club will put them to good use.

The Mozambique Bird Club contacts are Carlos Bentos (Chairman), Av. 25 de Setembre 1514-1, Maputo, or Vincent Parker, EWT, PO Box 4203, Maputo.

Source: Promerops *255, p 5*

Forest fragmentation in Madagascar

Madagascar is well known for the high degree of endemism among its flora and fauna. Many of these endemic species are forest dwelling and seriously threatened by deforestation. To manage and conserve these species effectively it is vital to have an understanding of the effects of forest fragmentation on species and a recent study by Olivier Langrand has addressed this problem. He looked at the Ambohitantely Special Reserve in Madagascar, half of which is covered with natural forest. The remainder is made up of managed grassland and exotic plantations.

The study found that there was a regular pattern of species extinction with decreasing size of the forest fragment. More specialised species were more prone to extinction and were most affected by edge effects. It was also revealed that extinctions tended to occur more frequently in small insectivorous ground dwelling species and mid and upper stratum insectivorous and nectivorous species. Three species found in Ambohitantely, Dark Newtonia *Newtonia amphichroa*, Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis* and Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascariensis* were particularly sensitive to fragmentation. Why do birds show this response to fragmentation? The reasons are many and varied but chance extinctions, small population sizes, low dispersal rates and changes in forest structure, floral composition and physical variables such as temperature, humidity and light all have roles to play in determining whether birds can survive.

This kind of study plays a very important part in designing a conserva-

Red-tailed Vanga
Calicalicus madagascariensis
Simon Mustoe

tion strategy for an area so that individual reserves can be tailored to support a whole suite of species. As with most of these kinds of studies, birds were the target species and it is a pity that more studies do not look at other groups. This is perhaps inevitable given the more detailed knowledge available on most of the world's birds, compared with other life forms. It is only recently, for example, that a book similar in scope to *Birds to Watch* has been published for another group, mammals, but this is eight years after the ICBP publication. To fully understand the impact of forest fragmentation on birds, other species groups will have to become far better known than they are at present.

Source: Working Group on Birds in the Madagascar Region Newsletter *6, pp 15-16, September 1996*

What makes a duck threatened?

Andy Green's article in *Conservation Biology* takes an interesting approach to looking at what makes a species rare. In his analysis he takes the 180 taxa in the Anatidae and compares various life history traits of the 48 threatened species with the other non-threatened species. He showed that habitat loss, hunting and introduced species were the major threats to the world's Anatidae.

The study showed the inland lentic wetland and forest dwelling species to be most threatened by habitat loss, whereas marine, grassland, tundra, arable land and scrub living species were least threatened. Island species were more threatened than continental species.

All in all, Africa comes out rather better than other continents. The countries which are most important for threatened Anatidae are Russia and China, although Madagascar scores highly with two highly threatened taxa (Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri* and the Madagascar Pochard *Aytha innotata*).

Source: Conservation Biology, *10(5), pp 1435-1445*

Demise of the Madagascar Pochard in Lake Aloatra

Lake Aloatra, Madagascar's largest lake, covers an area of 220 km^2 and is home to two endangered waterbirds, the Madagascar Pochard *Aytha innotata* and Aloatra Little Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolovatus*. The results of a 12-month survey starting in January 1993 have recently been published. The aim of the survey was to locate the Madagascar Pochard and take some birds into captivity to start a captive breeding programme. The ecological condition of the lake was also monitored through collections of fish, plants and invertebrates.

The findings suggest that introduced perch *Tilapia* spp and other commercial species now dominate and aquatic macrophytes account for a very small proportion of the total number of species recorded. Sedimentation is high and the pH of the water has dropped, which has led to the release of large amounts of iron into the lake. This general deterioration has led to reduced numbers of diving ducks (eg White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*, Madagascar Pochard and Madagascar Little Grebe *Tachybaptus pelzelnii* and Aloatra Little Grebe). In fact no Madagascar Pochards were encountered during the survey, although older inhabitants recognised descriptions of the 'onjy' and claimed they had seen it the previous year.

The overall degradation of Lake Aloatra, through introduced plants, fish and mammals, modern farming techniques and sedimentation, has caused the decline of several bird species and undoubtedly the extinction of many other species. As Lake Aloatra is of great economic importance it is going to be very difficult to slow this decline in the lake's ecosystem.

Source: Working Group on Birds in the Madagascar Region Newsletter *6, pp 17-19*

East Africa

New 'Birding in Zaire' web site

Tommy Pederson has drawn our attention to his new website dedicated to 'Birding in Zaire' It includes site guides and a checklist for this little known country. The site is under construction but is well worth checking out. The address of the web site is: http://home.sn.no/~stingray/

Contributed by Tommy Pederson

Nyika Bird Project

On 8 March 1997, an expedition leaves Britain to spend six months in a remote region of the Nyika Plateau in northern Malawi. The multi-disciplinary team from Europe and Africa will include five ornithologists who plan to study both the Palaearctic migrants moving through the area and the African birds.

We will be using standard observational techniques such as point counts and migration watches to calculate status and abundance of the birds of Nyika. We will also carry out an intensive ringing programme to try and discover the origin of the migrants using and moving through the area.

Each team member will be making a significant contribution to expedition funds but we still need financial help for things such as mist-nets and rings and, very importantly, the funding of Malawian scientists to work with us. We will be submitting a report of the expedition for publication in the ABC bulletin on our return. The expedition will probably have left for Malawi by the time you read this but there will be a further bird ringing trip in October and it is the intention of the organisers that this will be an ongoing project. So if you want to contribute to the expedition costs, you have some worn mist nets, other surplus ringing equipment or some binoculars that could be given to Malawians, please get in touch. All equipment donated will be left in Malawi for their use.

Andy Mitchell or Lyn Wells,
294 Brantingham Road, Chorlton,
Manchester, M21 0QU.
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)161 881 7818

Nairobi Bird Seminar

On 29 October 1996, almost 50 people attended a bird conservation seminar in Nairobi entitled 'Birds and People' to discuss research undertaken by students and other workers supported by the BirdLife Partner in Kenya, the East Africa Natural History Society, and the Ornithology Department of the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi. Introduced by the Convenor of BirdLife Kenya, Dr Nathan Gichuki (well known for his research on Grey Crowned Cranes *Balearica regulorum*), the morning session included papers by Paul Matiku (on East Coast Akalat *Sheppardia gunningi*), Colin Jackson (on the Nairobi Ringing Group), Muchai Muchane (on Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei*) and Peter Njoroge (on Hinde's Babbler *Turdoides hindei*).

Chaired by the head of the museum's Ornithology Department, Dr Leon Bennun, a lively discussion on how to conserve birds in an agricultural landscape followed the papers. In the case of Hinde's Babbler, one landowner in the area has already established a private nature reserve accommodating some babbler groups. Moreover, there is considerable scope for encouraging people to recognise that only limited land management (maintaining some dense Lantana thickets, for example, where the babblers can shelter and nest can make a significant difference to the population.

In the afternoon two papers on colonial nesting waterbirds were presented, dealing with Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rufescens* at Rakewa (by Paul Onyango and other members of the Lake Victoria Wetlands team) and with the famous heronries at Ahero (by Jeam Agutu from Maseno School). Both concentrated on the real difficulties of brokering a relationship between people's demands for living space and resources like fuelwood and the demands of colonial nesting birds for undisturbed sites. Further lively discussion followed centring on the value of ensuring that solutions are created at site level after a careful examination of both the birds and people's needs. At Ahero, the list of problems the birds create is impressive, including noise (1,150 nests create a lot of noise), guano (stinks and rusts roofs), predators like monitor lizards (which also kill chicken chicks), broken thorns and bones impaled in children's feet. Some of these may seem trivial, but they clearly make a real difference to the quality of people's lives in Ahero, and solutions need to be found. All in all it was an good day's meeting, providing much food for thought, and an opportunity to learn about some of the relevant bird conservation work being undertaken in Kenya.

Contributed by John Fanshawe

Illegal poisoning of birds in Kenya

At the Ahero (Kisumu) and Mwea rice schemes in Kenya there have been reports of many birds dying directly as a result of the use of the insecticide Furadan. Furadan is a very useful chemical in agriculture and is important in the country's crop protection. Using it according to the manufacturer instructions causes very few problems and in the rice schemes farmers are not allowed to apply Furadan themselves, since the Irrigation Board has its own staff who administer the chemical.

However, at Ahero there are deliberate illegal poisonings intended to procure birds to be sold as food. Furadan is freely available, but the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) has pointed out that the people who do the poisoning do not have the resources to buy the chemical and they suggest that they must be obtaining it for free elsewhere. A meeting was held in July 1996 to discuss these problems. Representatives from various interested parties including FMC (the manufacturers), Pesticide Control Board, AgroEvo EA Ltd, National Environmental Secretariat and the Kenyan Wildlife Service attended the meeting to discuss solutions to the problem.

Human health risks were said to be low because the insecticide is metabolised in the body and toxicity is lower to mammals than to birds. However toxicity concerns are to be used to discourage the use of the chemical to kill birds. Various recommendations were made at the meeting. These include:

- the manufacturer and distributor should do something tangible to combat this problem and the distribution from Irrigation Board supplies should be more tightly controlled.
- making the product unpalatable or unattractive to birds. It was estimated this could take three years.
- workshops should be arranged for the public to inform them that the chemical is hazardous to health and killing wild birds is illegal and that the law will be enforced.
- joint efforts should be made to involve the local administration in the problem to help spread the word and arrest any persons deliberately killing or selling wild birds.
- KWS should enforce the law that allows them to arrest people killing wild birds
- KWS, AgroEvo and Pesticide Control Board should discuss ways of initiating a public relations campaign against the misuse of the pesticide.

Summarised from a report by Oliver Nasirwa, Kenyan National Waterbird Coordinator

Indian House Crow spreads in Kenya

The introduction of non-native species can be a recipe for disaster, as shown by the Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens* in Kenya. Since its arrival in the 1940s, it has expanded along the whole of the coastal strip from Malindi in the north, to the Tanzanian border in the south. Birds are also moving inland and are now seen 50 km inland along the Nairobi road. In the next few years they may also become established in Nairobi.

House Crows are a major predator of some native birds and they are highly competitive with others. They are also a health risk to humans and cause damage to livestock and crops. Given their current rate of expansion they may, in time, spread over much of Africa and present yet one more problem for the region's biodiversity.

Control measures have started in Kenya. Poisoning in the north has had some success and a new operation has been set up in the area around Mombasa. Bird surveys have taken place in the areas where control is practised and populations will be monitored throughout the eradication programme to investigate the effectiveness of the efforts.

Source: Kenya Birds *4, pp 55-56*

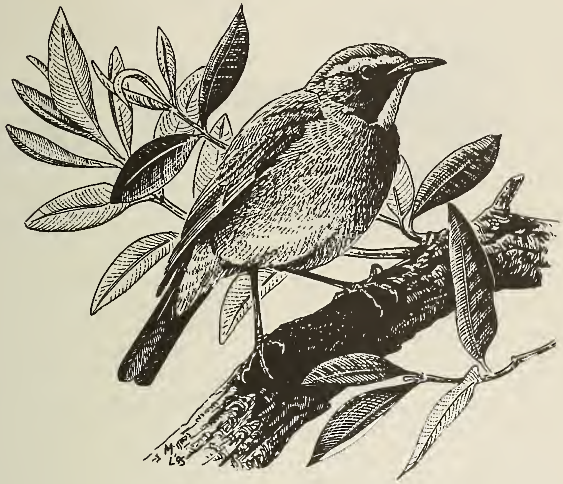
Ringing at Ngulia breaks all records

Ngulia Lodge in Tsavo West National Park is Kenya's premier ringing site. In December 1969, Alec Forbes Watson and Alex Duff MacKay visited the recently completed lodge in Tsavo and during their first night were amazed to find thousands of migrant birds that had been attracted down by the bright game-viewing lights. As a result, the Ngulia Ringing project was born and since then ringers have visited the site every year.

Experience has shown that birds are attracted to the lights under misty and moonless conditions and that both are essential. With only about 20 nights when the moon is suitable and with the unpredictability of the mist, the numbers caught at Ngulia from year to year can vary dramatically. In spite of this over 156,000 Palearctic migrants have been ringed since 1969.

This figure has involved 49 species of Palaearctic migrant and is dominated by Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* and Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, with totals in excess of 30,000 for each. Other species with more than 1,000 caught include Basra Reed Warbler *A. griseldis*, Irania *Irania gutturalis*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Red-tailed Shrike *L. isabellinus* and Rufous Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*. Many other migrants such as raptors and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops persicus* pass through in considerable numbers during the day but are not caught.

Most birds are caught in mist-nets erected near the game lodge. The 1995 season was the best on record with over 29,000 birds ringed, smashing the previous record by 12,000 birds. Conditions were almost perfect in November and in one week over 10,000 migrants were ringed, including 3,100 in a single day. Thrush Nightingales and Marsh Warblers dominated but *Hippolais* warblers, especially Olive-tree Warblers *H. olivetorum*, were unusually abundant.



Irania *Irania gutturalis*
Mike Langman

In December, Basra Reed Warblers and Garden Warblers *S. borin* numbers were up but Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* and Blackcaps *S. atricapilla* were absent. Other species caught included five species of nightjar, a Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* and an immature Red-naped Bush Shrike *Laniarius ruficeps*.

Source: Kenya Birds *4, pp 58-59*

Update to the Kenya checklist

A revised Kenyan list has recently been produced. There have been changes owing to the various lumping and splitting of species/races, and 24 species have been dropped from the Kenya list. However, 53 new species have been added since the last checklist was produced sixteen years ago and, as with many all-encompassing works on African birds, birders are in for yet another set of name changes

But don't despair, this is an attempt to produce a definitive list of East African bird names. English names of African birds have been notoriously unstable and this is an attempt, along with committees from other African regions, to produce a list of standardised names. These changes proposed by the sub-committee generally fall in line with other recent changes in English names elsewhere. Most just include the addition of a prefix such as African, Eurasian or Common and some are very minor with a slight change in the name or punctuation (punctuation really is important), the change of Violet-crested Turaco to Purple-crested Turaco being one example. With publications through the years such as Mackworth-Praed & Grant, van Perlo, Dowsett & Forbes-Watson, *Birds of Africa* etc, there are now several generations of birders all calling birds by different names. A standard list is desperately needed for Africa but it is going to take a long time before it becomes widely used.

Source: Kenya Birds *4, pp 59-60 & pp 97-104*

Shoebills Galore...

Although most of southern Sudan remains inaccessible to all but the most intrepid birders, various relief agencies have airborne access. In the course of the last two years, William Fielding, working for the World Food Programme, has flown over most of the south. He reports large ['hundreds'] and regular concentrations of Shoebills *Balaeniceps rex* in Western Nile Province along the White Nile between Nyal and Leer and around Thiekthou on the Bahr el Ghazal. In September 1996, at least 200 were nesting in a colony in papyrus swamp close to the airstrip in Nyal. Northern White Rhino have also been sighted at the former site.

Contributed by Bill Harvey,
British Council, Nairobi

The Seychelles Grey White-eye — a species facing extinction

The Seychelles Grey White-eye *Zosterops modesta* is a critically endangered bird confined to Mahé, the largest of the granitic islands of the Seychelles. Intensive searching and census work carried out in 1995/96 by the Division of Environment, Seychelles, BirdLife International, the Environment section of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport and an expedition from Glasgow University, UK, found only four pairs. The number and distribution of white-eyes have drastically declined in the last few decades and the total world population appears to be as low as 25–30 individuals in two main localities both close to human settlement and human-created rural habitats.

Close monitoring of the few remaining pairs has shown high rates of nest failure and low breeding success, most probably owing to egg predation by introduced rats and Indian Mynas *Acridotheres tristis*, but also possibly by the endemic Seychelles Bulbul *Hypsipetes crassirostris*. Food availability does not appear to be a limiting factor. BirdLife International and the Seychelles Division of the Environment, are preparing a conservation project aimed at increasing the White-eye population through day-to-day monitoring of the few pairs left, and by protecting nests against predators to maximise breeding success.

Complementary research on feeding, breeding biology and habitat selection of this poorly known species will also be conducted and the possibilities of developing a captive breeding programme will be considered. Translocations to small rat-free islands could be a medium-term solution, to be undertaken when the present population has increased. The endemic subspecies of Chestnut-flanked White-eye *Zosterops mayottensis semiflava*, restricted to Marianne Island, became extinct around 1930. Without fast action, the Seychelles Grey White-eye will probably become extinct within the next ten years.

The Seychelles biodiversity monitoring programme (project G1 EMPS) is sponsored by the European Union with the support of the Dutch Trust Fund. The Glasgow University Expedition benefited from a BP/FFPS Expedition Award.

Contributed by Gerard Rocamora,
BirdLife International Consultant,
Division of Environment, MFAPE,
Box 445, Mahé, Seychelles

Seychelles Magpie-robin update

In *Bull ABC* (3) 1, the sad news that Brown Rats *Rattus norvegicus* had colonised Fregate Island, the stronghold of the Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, was announced. Since Magpie-robins only appear to be able to survive on islands free of introduced mammalian predators, the arrival of rats on Fregate is highly likely to have severe consequences for the bird. Funding from the island owner for an attempt at a ground-based eradication in the area where the rats are thought to be confined, was eventually secured in April 1996 and the attempt was started in June.

Unfortunately when only 20 days into the planned 90 day poisoning operation, a juvenile Magpie-robin was found showing signs of acute rodenticide poisoning and a further juvenile and two adults were missing. All possible precautions were taken against non-target species reaching the poison and it appeared that the Magpie-robins died from secondary poisoning through eating invertebrates that had ingested it. Since a possible 25 birds were at risk from secondary poisoning and there was little evidence that rats were taking lethal doses, the decision was taken to abandon the eradication attempt.

It should be noted that never before had an attempt been made to eradicate rats during the first stages of colonisation. All successful eradications of rats on islands to date have been carried out after islands have become saturated with rats and food stress leads to increased chance of bait-take. The Fregate attempt probably failed as there was an abundance of naturally available food. The only option left to eradicate rats from Fregate is a whole island eradication once the rat population has reached its peak. This would involve taking all Magpie-robins into captivity for the duration of the eradication attempt and either laying a poison grid over the entire island or spreading rodenticide pellets from the air.

The latter method has been used extensively by the New Zealand Department of Conservation and has proved to be 100 percent successful. Unfortunately the likelihood of such an eradication taking place on Fregate has been stymied by the construction of a luxury hotel complex on the island and it is felt that such an eradication would not be compatible with the island's status as a high-class tourism resort. If rats are to stay on Fregate, the Seychelles Magpie-robin faces a very uncertain future.

On a more positive side, the Seychelles Magpie-robin population has continued to increase and by October 1996 stood at 68 fledged birds. The three pairs translocated to Cousin Island in 1994 and 1995 have between them fledged 11 offspring and Cousin now supports around 25 percent of the entire population – not bad for an island only a tenth of the size of Fregate In November 1996, a final pair of Magpie-robins was translocated to Cousin and three pairs of robins were established on neighbouring Cousine Island. Translocations to Aride Island remain problematic with only a single female remaining alive out of six birds translocated in November 1995. Translocation stress is thought to have been a cause of at least two of the deaths with disease responsible for two more. Veterinary expertise has been sought in an attempt to find a solution to the disease problems and modified release techniques will hopefully make the translocation experience less stressful to the birds.

Contributed by Rob and Vicki Lucking, BirdLife International, Fregate Island, PO Box 330, Victoria, Seychelles. Email: magrob@mail.seychelles.net; Tel: ++248 225655; Fax: ++248 323126.

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*
Simon Mustoe

Ethiopian Mapping Scheme

Work on the Ethiopian Mapping Scheme is continuing and records from birders visiting the country are always welcome. Ethiopia is becoming one of the most visited countries by birders and these visits can make a real contribution to the knowledge of the birds of this country. Records can be sent to John Ash, Godshill Wood, Fordingbridge, Hants SP6 2LR.

Contributed by John Ash

North Africa

Houbara Bustard split

Recent work headed by Philippe Gaucher of the National Wildlife Research Centre at Taif in Saudi Arabia is throwing doubt on the current systematic treatment of the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*. The Houbara is a true desert species and has a wide range which covers the much of the desert area of northern Africa and Asia. Two subspecies are conventionally recognised on mainland Africa and in Asia, *C. u. undulata* in north Africa and *C. u. macqueeni* from eastern Egypt and Arabia and central Asia. One other race, *C. u. fuerteventurae*, occurs on the Canary Islands.

Work at the research centre has shown that the respective courtship displays of the two mainland subspecies differ in many ways both visually and vocally and that the two mainland races are sufficiently genetically divergent as to be distinct at the molecular level when comparing mitochondrial DNA.

Using genetic divergences to separate species is difficult. In many small isolated populations, random events can cause them to show very large genetic differences from other populations of the same taxon, but this does not mean they are separate species. The 'genetic difference' between *macqueeni* and *undulata* was found to be one percent, suggesting that these two forms are distinct and are on different evolutionary paths, but it does not necessarily mean they are separate species.

However, the most compelling evidence that these could be split seems to be the differences in courtship display. Since this display is an integral element of pair bonding and of species recognition, the differences could act as a genetic barrier between the two races. Coupled with this genetic evidence it seems the differences of display justify splitting the two species into two species Houbara Bustard *C. undulata* and Macqueen's Bustard *C. macqueeni*. The race found on the Canary Islands appears to be very similar to *C. undulata*.

Source: Dutch Birding *18, pp 248-256*

Waldrapp crisis

Most of the world's remaining Waldrapp *Geronticus eremita* occur in four colonies in Morocco, totalling 220 adult birds. In May 1996, 21 adult birds were found dead and another 17 went missing in two of the three colonies in Souss-Massa National Park, south of Agadir. The loss of 17 percent of a small population of birds in only nine days raises very serious concerns about the viability of the species over the long term. The reason for the birds' death remains a mystery and post mortems to ascertain the cause of death have been inconclusive.

Source: World Birdwatch *18(3), p 2*

Decline in wader numbers in the Banc d'Arguin NP in Mauritania

The Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania is one of the world's most important sites for breeding and wintering waterfowl. Birds from breeding areas in Greenland, Europe and Scandinavia converge on the area to spend the winter. Estimates of the number of wintering waders have varied but the most widely accepted figure is in the region of 2,250,000 birds which were estimated from surveys in the winter of 1980. These have been used ever since and, given the importance of the area, it is perhaps surprising that more attention has not been focused on the area.

Wader counts in the Banc d'Arguin are difficult to carry out and previous efforts have counted birds at high tide roosts which have been identified from aerial surveys. Recent surveys by Philippe Gowthorpe and his co-workers have given cause for concern. Various counts were made between 1990 and 1994 and the total number of waders counted was in the region of 1,050,000 to 1,255,000 birds, indicating a decrease of just over 50 percent. There are many potential reasons for these declines, not least the methods of counting. The counts have been carried out in 1973, 1978–79 and 1980 all by different people. Counting large numbers of waders is not an easy task and observer bias may well be a factor.

However the counts in 1980 and 1982 were carried out in a similar way — aerial surveys and counts of high tide roosts — and it seems as though there is a genuine decline in some species. Large declines of between 40–60 percent have occurred in most species except two small calidrids, the Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and Sanderling *C. alba*. A more plausible explanation is the general deterioration on the ecosystem in the Banc d'Arguin. Revenue from fishing provides most of the foreign currency earned by Mauritania. The park, with its cooler waters and upwellings is made up of shallows containing seed-producing plants, which support large numbers of crustaceans, fish and cephalopods. It is a nursery area for fish and overfishing may be contributing to a large decline in fish stocks. This decline in fish stocks is associated with the decline in both wintering and breeding birds.

Source: Alauda *64(2), pp 81-126*

West Africa

Migration of a Short-toed Eagle

Satellite tracking of birds is now a widely used technique but news of its use on a new species is always exciting. In a recent issue of *Alauda* there is a paper documenting the tracking of a Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*. Birds breeding in Europe are known to winter in the Sahel region of West Africa, 14–17 degrees north. When and how quickly the birds migrate and whether they stop off on the way is not known. The only data available are count data from Gibraltar and the Bosphorus, but the route taken by an individual bird has never been ascertained. Satellite tracking is going to revolutionise our understanding of bird migration, especially for those birds like Short-toed Eagle, whose wintering quarters are poorly known. Two recoveries of ringed birds have come from Morocco and Mali.

A sick bird which was unable to fly was found in the Vendée region of France in September 1994 and after being kept in captivity for 10 months was fitted with a satellite transmitter and released on 24 July 1995. The bird remained in the area of release until 3 September when it started its migration south. The bird travelled a distance of 4,045 km to Mali covering between 100–234 km a day, averaging 135 km. It only stopped off once, spending four days along the River Niger. This form of tracking allows home ranges to be calculated and this individual had a home range of 92 km^2 in the summer and 410 km^2 in the winter. These insights into a single bird's migration journey are remarkable, and the satellite tracking technology used to produce them will undoubtedly become a critical tool for studying the whole field of bird migration.

Source: Alauda *64, pp 339-344*

Annotated Checklist of the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj

The Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj in northern Senegal is one of the best

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*
Mark Andrews

studied areas in West Africa. Data from over 25 expeditions have been collated and included in a checklist published in *Malimbus*. This list concentrates on Palearctic migrants but Afrotropical species are adequately covered. Information from the major expeditions between 1990 and 1993 is included and it is good that some of the data collected on these expeditions are being published at last, albeit in a limited form.

Details of membership of the West African Ornithological Society, which publishes *Malimbus*, can be obtained from the membership secretary Robert Sharland, 1 Fisher's Heron, East Mills, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 2JR, UK.

Source: Malimbus *18, pp 74-111*

New arrangements for visiting Abuko Forest Reserve in The Gambia

In an agreement with the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, members of the Tanji Birders club will, with prior arrangement, be able to have access to the Abuko Forest Reserve before dawn. The normal gate fee of 30 Delasai will apply. For more details of membership to Tanji Birders please send an SAE to Tanji Birders, 154 Lightwoods Hill, Warley, West Midlands B67 5ED, UK.

Contributed by Clive Barlow

Development on Príncipe threatens endemic birds

On 14 April 1996, the government of São Tomé e Príncipe signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a South African company, WADCO (Pty) Ltd, for the creation of an offshore Free Zone in Príncipe. The development is proposed to take place in the west of Príncipe, an area of great importance for biodiversity conservation. The development occurs in an area which has been previously recommended for a national park.

The main business activities of the zone will be to provide services to the oil rich countries around the Gulf of Guinea and would require the building of a deep water port. Within the Free Zone, it is envisaged that business activities such as marine engineering, aviation engineering and heavy plant / high tech equipment servicing among others would be involved.

The area of the concession covers a large area of western Príncipe which overlaps with the proposed protected area which ECOFAC has been promoting (see *Bull ABC* 3(1), p 11 for details). It is hoped that the law delimiting the protected areas on both São Tomé and Príncipe will go before the National Assembly soon. Under the terms of the memorandum, development will not take place above the 100m contour unless such land was previously under cultivation. Additionally, the development requires 150 hectares of land next to the airport for aviation and storage facilities. This was recommended as a buffer zone to the proposed national park.

Species such as the Príncipe race of the Olive Ibis *Bostrychia rothschildii* and the Príncipe White-eye *Zosterops ficedulinus* and the São Tomé Thrush *Turdus olivaceofuscus* will be at risk. At present, plans are for the development to go ahead on Príncipe with a contingency plan for an area in the north-east of São Tomé. Either way this plan is going to have effects on the biodiversity of the islands. Both areas are rich in marine resources and several endemic corals and presumably other taxa occur in these areas. The development of the port in São Tomé will not threaten the endemic birds of the country as savanna is not a habitat of high conservation importance for birds but it will totally destroy the only coral reef on the island

At the current time, the Memorandum of Understanding envisages a further agreement being signed within 18 months after the results of various studies have been analysed. These include a social impact study within the defined area to be presented by 1 December 1996, a provisional Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be presented by 1 August 1996 and a complete EIA by 1 February 1997.

Source: ABC News *1(1), pp 1-4*

Requests

Possible sub-adult phase of Gunning's Robin

While on a birding trip north of Beira, Mozambique during September 1995, we spent two nights on Chiniziua forest (18°58´S 35°04´E) which is approximately 50 km north-east of Muanza. Whilst sitting quietly in a thicket within the forest I noticed a small dull-coloured bird hopping between branches about 6 m away. At first I thought it was a Slender Bulbul *Phyllastrephus debilis* as the species had been calling in the vicinity. When I finally obtained a good view of the bird I realised I had been looking at a robin and that could be a sub-adult phase of Gunning's Robin *Sheppardia gunningi*. Sub-adult phases have not been recorded in the genus *Sheppardia* (T.B. Oatley pers comm) and by making mention of this sighting it is hoped that other birders visiting the area will be aware of the possibility of the occurrence of this sub-adult form that is as yet undescribed.

Hugh Chittenden, P.O. Box 360,
Eshowe 3815, South Africa.

Bird lore and bird mythology

I am currently collecting information for a book on the mythology and lore associated with birds from around the world. I am interested in the cultural associations that birds have acquired both in an historical and contemporary context and am especially keen to gather information on the significance birds have had for pre-industrial peoples. I am also interested in examining the cultural importance and exploitation of birds. Two examples are the pre-Columbian Aztec feather art and use of birds-of-paradise in ceremonial dress in Papua New Guinea. Any data on these themes would be very gratefully received and fully acknowledged in any publication.

Please contact: Mark Cocker, 9 Primrose Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich NR1 4AT, Norfolk, UK. Tel/ Fax. +44 1603 611797.

Annotated checklist on the avifauna of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, north-east Zaire

An annotated checklist on the avifauna of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, in north-east Zaire is currently being completed. All observers who have visited this area are kindly invited to send their records to the author, Marco Sacchi, Breitfeldstrasse 44, 3014 Bern, Switzerland, Tel. + 31 332 78 12. Of particular interest is information concerning numbers, exact locality, habitat, forest stratum and sociability of the observed species. All contributors will receive a complimentary copy of the annotated checklist.

African Bird Club

CONSERVATION FUND

The African Bird Club is pleased to announce the launch of the ABC Conservation Fund

The fund has been set up to support small conservation-based projects in Africa. The club has allocated £2,000 ($3,000) for 1997 and aims to encourage as wide a range of ideas as possible. Many different types of projects will be considered as long as there is a clear conservation benefit. These could include:

- survey and research into African birds
- production of guides to the common birds of a country in local languages
- educational materials
- leaflets / posters with conservation messages
- interpretation boards at nature reserves
- design and production of T-shirts with local / international conservation slogans
- other ideas will be considered!

Applications can be made at any time to the address below. The maximum grant in any one case will be £500 but is likely to be smaller. Requests should be made by letter and should include the following details:

- plan of proposed project and why it is important
- budget
- amount requested from the fund
- details of how payment can be made

As the fund is small, several restrictions will apply:

- applicants must be African nationals
- the requested grant from ABC should be a substantial part of the proposed budget, i.e. contributions to very large projects will not be considered
- expeditions organised from outside Africa will not be considered unless the request comes from an African member
- projects that are being carried out as part of normal academic study will not be considered
- projects which reach a wide audience will be favoured

Applications should be sent to:

ABC Conservation Fund
African Bird Club
c/o BirdLife International
Wellbrook Court
Girton Road
Cambridge CB3 ONA, UK.

UK Registered Charity No. 1053920

Field identification of the brood-parasitic whydahs *Vidua* and Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*

Robert B. Payne

Summary: The whydahs *Vidua* and Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis* are brood-parasitic finches that use other species of birds to rear their young. Whydahs use estrildid finches; Cuckoo Finch use the grass-warblers *Prinia* and *Cisticola*. The whydah males in breeding plumage have long tails, the females are streaky brown birds, and the juvenile plumage often closely resembles the host young. Most whydahs mimic the songs of their host species. The songs are helpful in identifying the species of paradise whydahs in West Africa, but the male breeding plumages are more distinctive; females also can be distinguished. Cuckoo Finches are not known to mimic host song. Males change from season to season due to wear in plumage from streaked dark brown to unstreaked yellowish above, females are similar to *Euplectes* bishops, and the young resemble the plumage of the host young.

The whydahs *Vidua* spp are brood-parasitic finches and are widespread in Africa from the Sahel through the open woodlands. The common name whydah and the genus *Vidua* have been used also for the long-tailed nest-building euplectine finches such as the Collared or Black Widow (or widow-bird, or whydah) *Euplectes ardens*, and there is little consistency in fieldguides in the use of widow and whydah. *Vidua* means 'widow', as in the Portuguese 'viúva', and derives from the long tail of the males, which is supposed to resemble a widow's black train. 'Whydah' is a variant of 'widow'.

Since the generic name *Vidua* Cuvier, 1817 was first used for Pin-tailed Whydah *V. macroura*, the name is appropriate for these birds. The whydahs also include the short-tailed indigobirds (which the author described in a previous paper in this journal)[29]. The bird most closely related to the whydahs is the Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*. Like the whydahs, it lacks a family life of its own, and depends on another species, the 'host,' to provide parental care; the individual birds that give the care are the 'fosterers'.

The whydahs lay their eggs in the nest of their host species, and their foster parents incubate the eggs and rear the young whydahs along with their own brood. Although each species of whydah can use several different estrildid finches as hosts for their young, most whydahs lay their eggs in the nests of one species. A male mimics the songs of this specific host species as well as singing songs typical of its own local population. Although their songs are useful in distinguishing the species of paradise whydahs, the whydahs are most readily distinguished by their plumage and the colours of bill and foot, and both males and females are distinctive in their appearance.

In addition to the adult male's mimicry of his host's songs, the young whydahs match the mouth patterns and colours and the begging calls of nestlings of their host species. The mouth colours and pattern of young Paradise Whydahs closely match the mouths of young Melba Finch *Pytilia melba*, and young Pin-tailed Whydahs *V. macroura* match the mouth of their waxbill *Estrilda* hosts. Other whydahs also mimic the nestling mouths of their host species, although there may not always be differences between whydah species. The nestling hosts, for instance, of Togo Paradise Whydah and Exclamatory Paradise Whydah have similar mouths. Juvenile plumage in some whydahs also resembles the host young. The unmarked grey of young paradise whydahs is especially like the appearance of young pytilia finches, while the golden plumage of young Straw-tailed Whydahs is similar to that of young Purple Grenadiers *Granatina ianthinogaster*.

Most whydah species are well known and the males can be readily identified in the field. However, the paradise whydahs are not as well known and even breeding males can be difficult to distinguish in West Africa, where there is a question about species limits. Males have similar breeding plumages but the length and shape of the tail, wing length, and the intensity of the colour of the nape and underparts varies among species and subspecies. Female whydahs often can be distinguished by their head pattern and the colours of bill and feet, and even female Cuckoo Finches can be distinguished from the similar female bishops. The following notes are based on my field observations, museum studies and observations of captive aviary birds, and on published material especially from the last 30 years.

Pin-tailed Whydah

Pin-tailed Whydah is the most widespread of its genus. Males in breeding plumage are black above with white on the rump and wing, a white face and collar, white below, and a tail with the four central feathers black, narrow and longer than the rest of the bird. The short outer-tail feathers are white on the tips and inner margins. The bill is red and the feet are black.

Females are streaky brown birds with a well-defined dark brown stripe on the side of the crown and on the face; the central crown and the supercilium are rufous to buff. Above they are rufous buff with blackish streaks, below they are whitish to buff with dark streaks on the breast. The tail has white inner margins to the three outermost feathers, which can be seen in flight or from below. The bill colour changes from red in the non-breeding season to black during the breeding period. First-year males are like females, but with a more boldly patterned head. There is a whitish, not buff, stripe on the crown, and the lateral crown stripe is black not brown, while the bill is red in all seasons. Juveniles are distinctive in being unmarked mouse brown with paler cheeks, white throat and pale buff below. The bill is black then turns reddish, and the feet are black.

Males display over an area of a few shrubs and each male is visited by several female whydahs. An old regional name is 'King-of-Six', which describes the polygynous mating of a successful male[1,3,25,30,31]. The male song is a tinny tune with rapid runs of motonic notes 8–10 per second, and a varied series of notes that jumble around in pitch; both males and females also have a distinctive harsh chatter. No song mimicry of the host has been noted. In courtship the male flies at the female while she feeds near his singing site, bounces in flight around her and flaps the long tail feathers, flying in a circle. At the end of such a display session, which can last for as long as a minute, the male flies back to his song perch, where the female joins him and they mate. Young males lacking a breeding plumage show the same behaviour towards a female.

Pin-tailed Whydahs are widespread and occur in grassy and open shrubby habitats through most of sub-Saharan Africa and on the islands of Fernando Po and São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea and in the Comoros Islands. They parasitise several waxbills, including Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*, Orange-cheeked Waxbill *E. melpoda*, Black-rumped Waxbill *E. troglodytes*, Red-rumped Waxbill *E. rhodopyga* and Swee Waxbill *E. melanotis*. Goldbreast *Amandava subflava* may also be a host but the observations are based on unidentified plain white eggs and not on nestlings or young. The mouth pattern of young Goldbreast is unlike that of the other waxbills.

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus* is sometimes reported as a host, but the claim is based on unidentified eggs in mannikin nests or on juvenile whydahs being present in flocks of mannikins[10,16]. However, the young whydahs may only join these flocks after they become independent from their waxbill hosts. Nestling and juvenile whydahs have a mouth pattern like their waxbill hosts. The base of the upper mandible forms a white shallow raised flange in the form of a 'U' and the two ends of the U each meet a broad papilla on the lower bill, so each side of the bill has three distinct gape ridges, like those of the young of the waxbill hosts. The white of these gape ridges is outlined in black. The palate is pale pinkish and the palate has a ring of five black spots.

Steel-blue Whydah

Steel-blue Whydahs *V. hypocherina* are glossy blue-black in male breeding plumage. The two central pairs of tail feathers are longer than the rest of the bird and narrow, like those of Pin-tailed Whydahs. The wing lining is white (light grey, or grey and blackish, in indigobirds), and the wing has a broad white band seen in flight from below, formed by the inner webs of the secondaries (a pale brown band occurs in some indigobirds). The flanks have a white spot normally concealed by the wings and back feathers, as is the white spot in the males of all other whydahs and the indigobirds. In flight this is conspicuous like the white of the flight feathers. The bill is smaller than in other *Vidua* species. Bill colour varies with the season and in breeding males it is white. Museum specimens sometimes have a red bill, due to post-mortem change, and males in non-breeding plumage have light grey or horn-coloured bills. The foot colour is grey.

The females resemble female indigobirds, with stubbier grey bills darker above than below, a more distinct eye-stripe, longer tail, and a white edge on the inside and tips of the rectrices and a narrower white edge on the outer margin, although this is only 1 mm in an unworn fresh feather. The white on the inner margin of the rectrices is visible in flight. In contrast, female Pin-tailed Whydahs have a wide strip of white (half the feather width) on the rectrices and their tail from below is more white than dark. The tail of female Steel-blues is dark with white trim. The back streaking and breast colour are the same in Steel-blue Whydahs and indigobirds. The face has a pale crown stripe and supercilium, less distinct than in Pin-tailed Whydahs of worn plumage at the same season, and female Pin-tails have a larger, thicker bill, black in the breeding season and red in the non-breeding season. The feet are pale grey in the Steel-blue Whydahs (orange in some indigobirds).

Juveniles are indistinctly streaked and have a light streak above the eye, a narrow white margin to the tail, and dark grey cheeks that contrast with the rest of the face, like the dark cheeks of their host species, Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos* and Pink Black-faced Waxbill *E.charmosyna*. The whydahs parasitise these waxbills [21,22].

In behaviour a male sings from a high perch. If a female visits, the male courts her by flying to the ground singing and when she joins him he does a quick jump over her, as if pricked by a pin, and flutters his wings and bobs the tail in the short flight. He repeats the display or feeds with her, then leads her in flight back to his perch.

Songs are long bouts of short twitters and chatters with little obvious pattern. In 1976 north I tape-recorded all of the following at Lake Victoria in Kenya: **1.** a repeated*chiff* , **2.** similar notes like *tik*, *chuff*, *whezzzz* and so on, 1–4 notes a second, but not a series of complex songs as in the indigobirds, that vary and drop in pitch and sound plaintive like swallow or canary calls, **3.** a rapid *jejejejeje* that sounds like a begging call of fledged Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* (other waxbills may have similar begging calls), **4.** an alarm chatter of the cordon- bleus, **5.** songs of the cordon-bleus.

Whether some males mimic the distinctive two-part whistles and songs of their host, the Black-faced Waxbill, is unknown. Cordon-bleus are not known to be hosts, but the distribution of Steel-blue Whydahs lies within their range (cordon-bleus have a much larger distribition than the whydahs) and the two occur locally together, so some whydahs may parasitise this finch, whereas others use the waxbills.

Shaft-tailed Whydah

Shaft-tailed Whydahs *V. regia* live in semi-arid habitats of thorn scrub in southern Africa, in drier habitats than other parasitic finches, and they also live together with indigobirds, Pin-tailed Whydahs and Paradise Whydahs in acacia bush and other scrubby habitats. They are common in some years in the Kalahari National Park in South Africa and Namibia, on Springbok Flats in eastern Transvaal, and occur into southern Mozambique and in Zambia occasionally as far north-east as Lochinvar National Park, where we saw them only twice in the 1970s.

Males in breeding plumage are black above, pale rusty brown below, and have a rusty collar over the nape. The tail is short and pale; the four central feathers are long and slender black shafts less than 2 mm wide with a black flag on the tip, wider than the tail of Pin-tailed Whydahs. The bill and feet are bright orange. Males sing on thorn trees and have distinct harsh song types, a harsh skeezing chatter, and a series of begging calls, distance alarm trills, and warbling songs with rising whistles at the end like their host Violet-eared Waxbills *Granatina granatina*. In courtship display the male hovers over a female as she visits him at his call-site. They also display while holding onto their perch while they flap the wings[2].

Females have the crown streaked rusty with a darker brown stripe on the side, the supercilium and face are paler; the back is light rusty or buff with dark brown streak, and below the plumage is light buff to whitish and unstreaked. The bill is larger than in the indigobirds, orange in the breeding season and changing to paler orange and brown in the non-breeding season. The feet are orange. Males in non-breeding plumage are streaky brown like females, more boldly marked on the head, and they have orange bills and feet. Juveniles are brown with indistinct streaks above, the head is unstreaked, and the underparts are rich rust, much like the juvenile host waxbills [17,33]. The bill is black but becomes orange and brown when the birds begin moult into the streaky plumage.

In the central Transvaal, a third of the nests of Violet-eared Waxbills were parasitised by Shaft-tailed Whydahs. The young whydahs can be distinguished from the waxbills, which have the same mouth pattern, by their larger size and, when feathered, by their brown not blue rumps, narrow bill (nostrils 3 mm apart in the whydah, 4 mm in the waxbill), browner, less reddish crown, white not light brown undertail coverts, and brown not blue tarsi [33].

Straw-tailed Whydah

Straw-tailed Whydah *V. fischeri* is the East African counterpart of Shaft-tailed Whydah, both in plumage and in its ecological association with a purple-and-brown *Granatina* waxbill as a host. Males in breeding plumage are black above with a bright yellow crown and forehead, the face and chin to upper breast are black, the rest of the upperparts are yellowish buff. The tail is short except for four grass-like central rectrices which are longer than the rest of the bird, 2–3 mm broad with fine barbs along the shafts, and coloured pale straw. The males quiver the flexible tail in song and flop it in display to a female while they hold on to their perch and sing. They also give this display when there is no female in sight. The bill and feet are bright orange.

Females are streaky brown above, and the head is nearly unstreaked or has a pale eye-stripe, dark rufous in fresh plumage but wearing and fading to rust or buff especially on the crown and forehead. The plumage is more distinct later in the breeding season, when the nape is still distinctly streaked, but the rusty tawny head has lost the dark tips to the crown feathers. The face is pale, without a distinct stripe, nearly the same sandy whitish colour as the breast. The bill and feet are orange. Males in non-breeding plumage are streaky brown like the females, but more boldly marked.

Juvenile plumage is rusty brown, unmarked or with indistinct streaks on the back. The bill is black and the feet are brown and change to orange when the young begin to moult. The plumage colour is nearly identical to that of the host Purple Grenadier *Granatina ianthinogaster*. The mouth pattern also matches that of the Purple Grenadier. The young whydahs have a more stout bill and a shorter, more square tail than the juvenile hosts. In contrast to most parasitic finches they are smaller than their host young by the time of fledging. In Tanzania, more than half of the host nests locally are parasitised by Straw-tailed Whydahs. The young whydahs grow up together with the host young and fledge at 16 days [17,19].

The song is 4–5 thin notes with a trill and often ends with high, rising whistles, which mimic the songs of the Purple Grenadier. Each male has several variations of song, and the songs of neighbouring males are identical. The alarm note is a sharp *tseek* and these notes are often run together in a chatter.

Paradise Whydah

The Paradise Whydahs *Vidua paradisaea* of southern and East Africa are remarkable in the breeding plumage of the male, with a long, pointed tail that is 2–3 times the length of the body. The two central tail feathers are long, broad, and twisted longitudinally around 90° and are prominent in a lateral view of the bird. Males are black above, maroon chestnut on the breast and buff on the belly. The band around the nape is golden, fading with the season to straw colour. The wing is 74–81 mm.

Male whydahs regularly give aerial displays twice a day, around 10.00 hr and again at 15.30 hr, with each display period lasting about 20 minutes. This clockwork-like behaviour I have watched at Lochinvar National Park in Zambia, Springbok Flats and Merensky Nature Reserve in the eastern Transvaal, and Lake Baringo in Kenya. Several males display in flight within sight at the same time and each appears to keep to a separate territory, although an intruder sometimes streams over it as the resident male accompanies him from the area, flying below as he remains between the intruder and the trees where the females visit and mate.

In flight display the male flies slowly round with fast wingbeats at a height of 20–100 m over an area of 50–100 m radius, then cruises slowly across the territory, and gives a whistled *whee-hew* call as he flies. In the cruise phase the central pair of rectrices are raised vertically at nearly 90° to the axis of the bird, and the longer second pair that envelop them trail behind the bird. After a half minute or so the male descends as he folds his wings to the sides then flaps again, and perches in the top of an acacia. There he gives a long, sizzling, warbling song of 10–12 seconds that mimics the song of the Melba Finch *Pytilia melba* [11,14,24]. After a minute or so of singing, if a female does not fly to him, he flies up at a sharp angle, rustling his tail feathers, and ascends to about 30 m, then he repeats the flight display and *whee-hew* call. Flight display has not been seen in other species of paradise whydah, perhaps because their tails are less suited for aerial display (pers obs)[19].

Females are streaked on the back, and have a streaked head with a buffy whitish mid-line and a broad blackish band on either side of the crown, a whitish supercilium, and a black C-shape vertical mark on the face. The tail is longer than in Pin-tailed Whydahs and rounded with the central feathers slightly longer than the outer ones. Female paradise whydahs in southern and east Africa with a wing of 76 mm or smaller (range, 73–79 mm) are this species. Bill colour is black, sometimes lighter grey on the undersides of the base of the lower mandible, and becomes paler in the non-breeding season [23]. The feet are blackish or dark brown. Males in non-breeding plumage have the black crown stripes and face marks broader and more distinct than in females, with a more whitish less buffy head stripe, and they are more streaked with blackish on the breast.

Juveniles match the mouths of the Melba Finch with a whitish gape flange lined with two black spots on the inner margin above and below, a large elongated violet spot at the either side of the back palate, and a single black spot on the hard pinkish palate (pers obs)[14,17,19]. Juvenile Paradise Whydahs are distinguished from Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs where they occur together by the black spot on their palate, and are smaller, as noted for females.

In Tanzania, Nicolai found more than half of the nests of Melba Finches were parasitised by the whydahs, often with more than one whydah egg or chick in a nest [19]. The nestling whydahs have a begging call like that of the nestling hosts, but as the young develop the calls become more different. The young whydahs were able to get more than their share of food by aiming higher in begging, when fed by captive foster Striated Munia *Lonchura striata*. In nests where the Melba Finch itself fed the young, there was no difference in feeding the two kinds of young.

In central Transvaal, Skead[33] found that 28 percent of Melba Finch nests were parasitised. Newly hatched whydahs can be distinguished from Melba Finch by the upper tubercles being larger than the lower ones, a darker skin, a grey-white not sandy-white down, and a broader more conical bill. Older chicks are distinguished by their larger size, uniform grey-brown plumage, brown not red rump, and six rather than eight scales on the tarsus.

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs *V. obtusa* are usually found in less arid areas than Paradise Whydahs, as are their hosts, the Orange-winged Pytilia *Pytilia afra*. They live in miombo woodlands of south-central Africa. The tail of breeding males is shorter, broad from the base to near the tip. With a width of 40 mm it is broader than the body of the bird when seen from the side. The nape is dark coppery rufous, the chestnut breast is darker and the dark colour extends further onto the belly. Wing length is 81–87 mm. The bill is black and the feet are blackish or dark brown[23].

Females usually have grey rather than black bills, although sometimes the upper mandible is black, and the bill is sometimes pinkish below. The feet are grey. The upperparts are striped, the head having a whitish crown stripe, bordered by a blackish lateral crown stripe and a whitish supercilium, but lacks the distinct vertical marks on the side of the face. Females in fresh plumage have a more strongly marked facial pattern than those with worn plumage, although none is as strongly marked as the other paradise whydah species, which breeds at about the same time. Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs have longer wings (Zambia, 77–84 mm), and all females with a wing of 80 mm or longer are this species. First-year males and adult males in non-breeding plumage are like females but more strongly marked with the black crown stripes and face marks broader and more distinct, more whitish and less buffy head stripes, and more blackish streaking on the breast. The bill is paler in the non-breeding season[23, 28].

The nestlings and juveniles have a mouth whose colour is like that of their host species, the Orange-winged Pytilia. In pattern it resembles that of the Melba Finch, with the purple spots but no black spot on the palate[14,17]. The plumage is unmarked grey, like that of the Paradise Whydahs. Three juvenile whydahs that I netted at Lochinvar National Park, Zambia, and suspected to be this species, on the basis of wing length (80 mm or greater) and the absence of a black spot on the palate, were kept in captivity for two years and developed the plumage of Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs.

Calls of these whydahs include a chatter like that of the previous species. The mimicry calls of the Orange-winged Pytilia include a harsh contact note, and a song with a rattling note and a series of flute-like descending whistles, followed by a crackling note[11]. The most frequently heard note is a simple descending flute-like whistle[12].

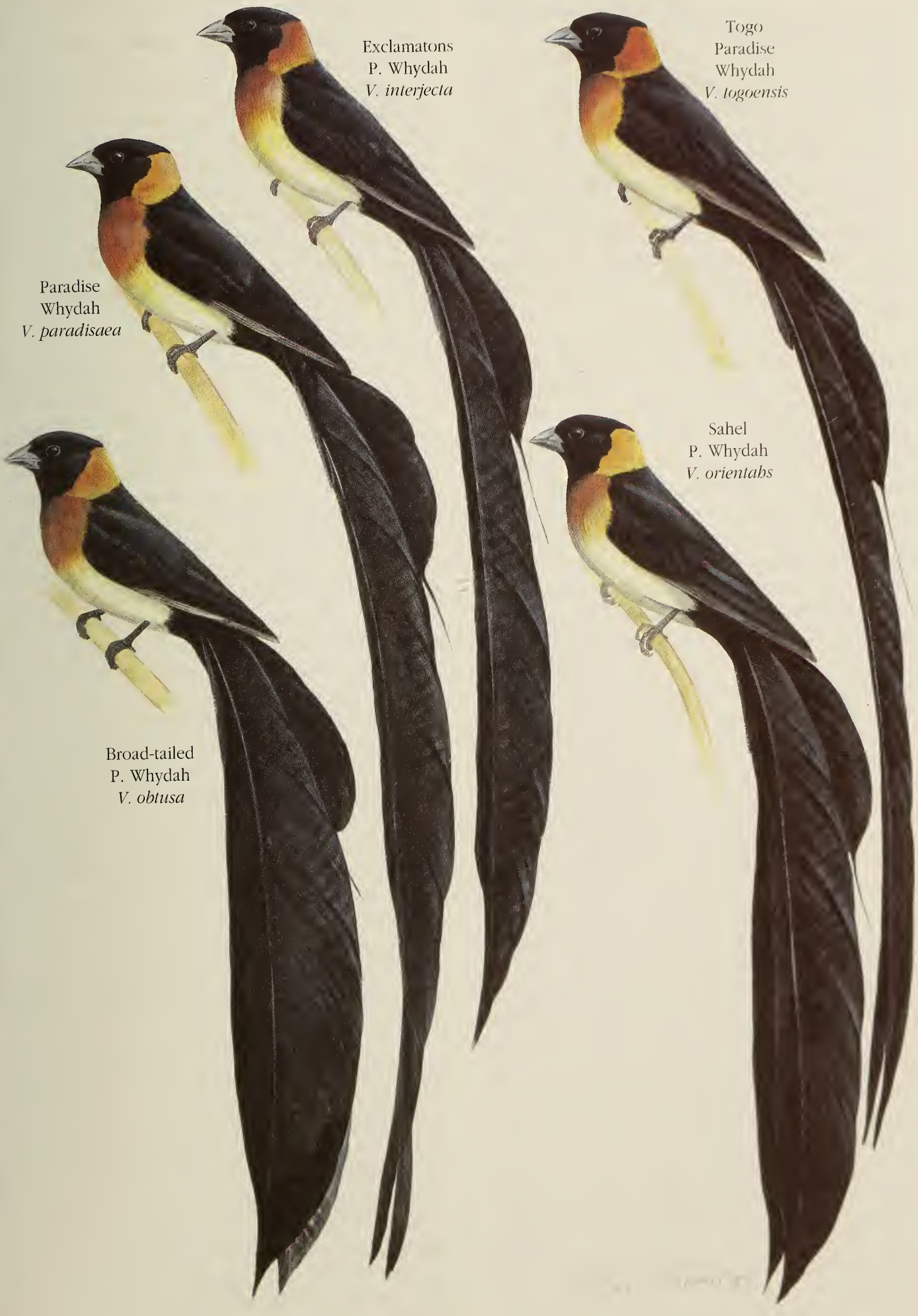
Both the Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah and Orange-winged Pytilia were common in miombo woodland at the Zambezi's source in north-western Zambia[23]. The whydah occurs together with the more abundant Paradise Whydah at Lochinvar National Park, where both species of pytilia were also seen. However, Orange-winged Pytilia was less common. Both whydahs and both pytilias are common near Monkey Bay and Rumphi in Malawi (pers obs)[23]. Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs also occur at Mikumi National Park, while near Iringa in Tanzania they occur with Paradise Whydahs[19]. The species is known also from Zaire south through eastern Zimbabwe and locally in northern Transvaal, but they rarely turn up in Kenya. They breed mainly from January–July, a later breeding season than most finches in the same areas. They start at end of the rains and continue well into the dry season[4]. In north-west Zambia I saw young whydahs being fed by adult Orange-winged Pytilias in mixed broods as late as mid-September[23].

Sahel Paradise Whydah

Sahel Paradise Whydah *V. orientalis* is the West African counterpart of Paradise Whydah, both in plumage and in their association with the Melba Finch as nesting host. The tail is shorter and of equal width almost to the tip, instead of tapering to a point. The males also are smaller (wing 72–80 mm). The nape is pale straw colour in the east (subspecies *V. o. orientalis*, Sudan to northern Cameroon) and dark brownish red in the west (subspecies *V. o. aucupum*, northwestern Nigeria to Senegal). The bill is black, while the feet are brown to grey.

Females have a grey bill and feet. They lack the distinct vertical marks on the side of the face that are seen in *V. paradisaea* in east and southern Africa. Females are 71–74 mm in wing length[28]. The juveniles look like the juveniles of Paradise Whydah but are smaller.

The mouth colours of young *V. orientalis* are like those of young Melba Finches, although they have not been studied in detail. Songs of Melba Finches in West Africa are shorter and more simple than those of east and southern African birds, and the mimicry songs of the Sahel Paradise Whydahs are correspondingly


Exclamatons
P. Whydah
V. interjecta
Togo
Paradise
Whydah
V. togoensis
Paradise
Whydah
V. paradisaea
Sahel
P. Whydah
V. orientalis
Broad-tailed
P. Whydah
V. obtusa

short[18,24]. The whydah in Senegal is this species, based on the evidence of specimens from Richard-Toll south to Bao Bolou near The Gambia.

Exclamatory Paradise Whydah

Exclamatory or Uelle Paradise Whydah *V. interjecta* is widespread in the Guinea woodland region of West Africa, from The Gambia and Mali to southern Sudan and the Uelle region, where Chapin described it as a new form later in the same year (1922) that Grote described the bird from further west. Chapin is the source of the above common name, which derives from its apparent similarity to a flying exclamation mark!

In the field, Exclamatory Whydah is very similar in appearance to Sahel Paradise Whydah, which has led to some confusion. However, near the Malian capital, Bamako, the whydahs are known as *V. interjecta*[7,27,28]. When a male Exclamatory Wydah in breeding plumage is viewed from the side, the tail looks 3–4 times the length of its wing. Identifications based on this feature suggest that *interjecta* is the widespread species in The Gambia, where the author has seen it Kano and Kiang West National Park.

The bill is grey while the feet are dark grey. In contrast, the female's feet are reddish, as are those of first-year males in non-breeding plumage. Dark grey melanin obscures the red of the adult males. The nape is dark brownish red, as in Sahel Paradise Whydah.

Females are similar in appearance to the latter species, but are greyish brown and not yellowish or buffy above, as in some female Sahel Paradise Whydahs. They also have a light orangy bill and pastel red feet. Wing length is 74–76 mm. Males in non-breeding plumage are like females, but more strongly streaked on the head and back. Their orangy bills and reddish grey feet also resemble their partners' soft parts. Juvenile whydahs of this species are unknown[28].

Nestling and young juvenile whydahs are thought to have a mouth like that of their host species, the Red-winged Pytilia *P. phoenicoptera*, with purplish lateral patches and no central black spot on the palate (pers obs)[14]. I have raised the young pytilia of all four species in my aviaries or observed them in the field, but have not seen the young whydahs of this or the next species. Songs and calls of the Red-winged Pytilia include a contact call: a sharp *pik* followed by a slurred whistle that rises then falls. Song phrases consist of a double loud descending whistle, a shorter whistle, and then a short buzz. These were also given by a captive Exclamatory Paradise Whydah[28] and by males of this whydah in the field at Yankari National Park in Nigeria[27].

In south-eastern Nigeria, at Abakaliki near Enugu, Nicolai[20] observed paradise whydahs with the Yellow-winged Pytilia *P. hypogrammica* and the whydahs parasitised them in the dry season. He referred to the whydahs as *V. togoensis*, the form of whydah that is associated with this pytilia in Upper Guinea region. However, no photographs or specimens were taken, and the only paradise whydah known from the area is the broader-tailed Exclamatory Whydah (Serle's specimens in AMNH, Tring and the Scottish National Museum), and this was the whydah I saw in eastern Nigeria along the Abong-Baissa road[29] where *P. hypogrammica* was the only pytilia species.

Togo Paradise Whydah

Togo Paradise Whydah *V. togoensis* is known only from Sierra Leone east to Ghana and Togo, and is the brood parasite associated in the Upper Guinea region with Yellow-winged Pytilia. However, the pytilia itself occurs from Sierra Leone east to Uganda, and in the more easterly portions of its range (from Nigeria to Zaire and southern Sudan) both this species and the Red-winged Pytilia are associated with the broader-tailed Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *V. interjecta*[6,8,27]. In 1979 in northern Cameroon I thought I saw narrow-tailed as well as broad-tailed males in areas where both Red-winged andYellow-winged Pytilia occur[27], but in 1992 in the same area I saw only the Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs.

Breeding males are black above, the nape is yellow rather than reddish brown, and the tail is long and narrow. The males are paler below and more yellow (less dark buff) than Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs, from which they differ in the longer and narrower tail, which is much narrower than the body — 22–24 mm (in Exclamatory Paradise and Sahel Paradise Whydahs it is about same width as the body — 32–34 mm). Wing length is similar in the two species (74–78 mm in the Togo Paradise)[28]. These whydahs are known from a few localities, including the Gambaga escarpment in northern Ghana, Bandama in Cote d'Ivoire, and Kabala and Karina in Sierra Leone.

Females and juveniles are unknown, although a juvenile from Bandama, Cote d'Ivoire, taken at the same time and place as an adult male of this whydah, and where the host Yellow-winged Pytilia is known, is probably this species[28]. It has unmarked grey plumage as in other paradise whydahs. The bill has a reddish base and dark tip, but the original colours were not noted on the specimen label. Nestling and young juvenile whydahs are thought to have a mouth like that of their host species, which is like Red-winged Pytilia in colour and pattern, with purplish lateral patches and no black spot on the pinkish palate (pers obs)[20].

The contact call of Yellow-winged Pytilia is a *tik* with a short whistle, rising in pitch and sometimes falling at the end, *tik-feew*[12]. Other calls I have recorded are a rhythmic *ta-ta-ta-ta* crackling chatter, faster in pitch than in Orange-winged Pytilia (and not heard from Red-winged Pytilia), and a *chick* like that of a firefinch *Lagonosticta* sp alarm call. These are combined in a sequence *chatter— chip— tik-feew* whistle in my captives (often the whistle is prolonged and lacks the sharp *tik* introduction). This is thought to be mimicked by the male whydah in his song while he perches in a tree. Although the pytilia calls are similar to those of Red-winged Pytilia, they differ in detail, and I have not heard the emphatic chatter from Red-winged Pytilia[12,17].

Hybrid whydahs, molecular genetics and species of whydahs

Hybrid whydahs are occasionally seen in the field and have been bred in captivity by aviculturists. Several species groups of *Vidua* can interbreed and produce offspring with males in showy plumage, black with a long tail[26]. Two males at Lochinvar National Park in Zambia were uniformly glossy blue-black in plumage, had a long tail with the four central feathers much longer than the others (shorter than in Paradise Whydahs) and twisted 90° laterally. Both had songs identical to Paradise Whydahs, mimicking the bubbling wheezy songs of Melba Finch on a perch and giving the *whee-hew* calls in flight. The one collected lacked the gloss of Steel-blue Whydah, the central tail feathers were broad (narrower than in Paradise Whydah), wing length was intermediate between the indigobirds and Paradise Whydah, and the wings and feet were black. Because the songs of the hybrids mimicked Melba Finch, the birds were probably reared in a Melba Finch nest and based their songs on those learnt from their foster species, so their mother was a Paradise Whydah and the father was an indigobird. Indigobird males mount uninvited birds, not only female indigobirds and Paradise Whydahs but also sunbirds Nectariniidae and sparrows *Passer*. Females are difficult to identify in the field, although an apparent hybrid was seen at Lochinvar with the two males[26].

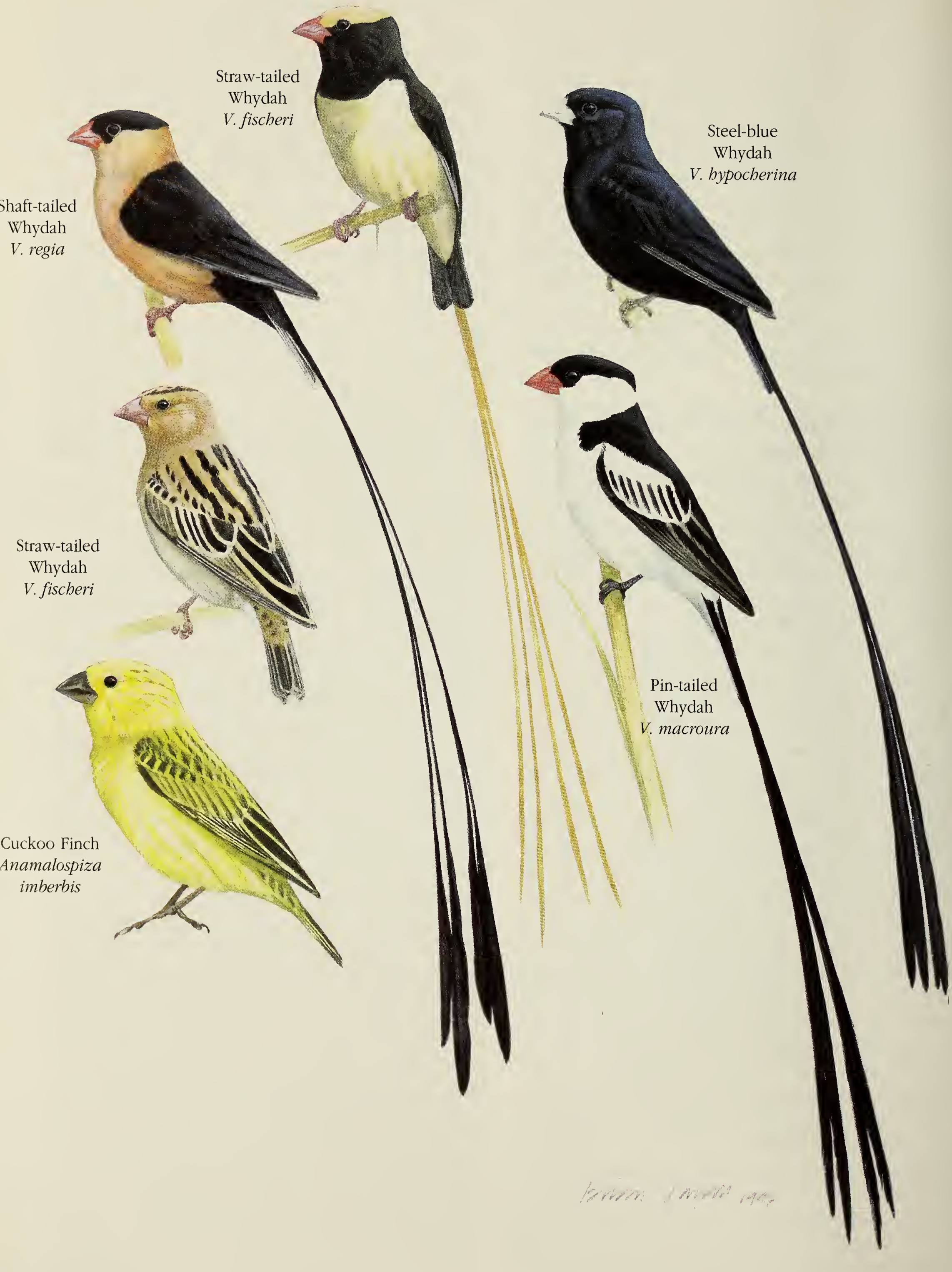
Other field observations of apparent hybrids have involved birds physically resembling one species but with the mimetic song of a different species[13,26]. Hybrids when uncommon do not necessarily indicate that the interbreeding birds are conspecific. The ability of mixed-species pairs to form hybrid offspring between species groups indicates behavioural opportunism and a primitive developmental trait that has been retained and is not necessarily an indication of close species relationships[9].

Molecular genetic studies indicate that Paradise Whydah and Sahel Paradise Whydah are not each other's closest relatives. Rather, each is more similar to another species of paradise whydah in its geographic region. Paradise is more like *obtusa*, while Sahel Paradise is more like *interjecta* [15]. Whether Paradise and Sahel Paradise intergrade in southern Sudan and Ethiopia where their ranges meet is uncertain. Unforuntately, museum skins are few and their tails are tatty. The eastern and western forms of Melba Finch intergrade in Sudan so these appear to be a single species. Although the two paradise whydahs may interbreed and intergrade where their ranges overlap, they do not appear to be a single phylogenetically defined species, insofar as their molecular genetics indicate that they are not each other's closest relatives. This implies that they colonised their host species independently in West Africa and in southern and eastern Africa[15].

Cuckoo Finch

Cuckoo Finch males look like canaries, and they were originally described as a new species of canary. In the dry season the males are in fresh plumage, olive greenish above, including the crown, and unstreaked yellow below. During the rainy season, when they breed, males are worn in plumage, and brighter, paler and more streaked above while the head, especially the forehead and face, is yellow. The feathers of the nape and back lose their dark tips to become yellowish with black shaft streaks. The bill is robust and short, very thick at the base, and black during the rains but pale brown in the dry season. Cuckoo Finches in West Africa are noticeably smaller-billed than those in East and southern Africa.

Adult female Cuckoo Finches are brown above and whitish below but washed rufous on the breast, with areas of brown streaking similar to female Red Bishop *Euplectes orix*. However, Cuckoo Finches have longer tails. The horn-brown bill has a straight not curved outline to the upper culmen, but near the skull the base is angled. The bill is also stubbier, the length being nearly the same as the depth at the nostril, whereas in the bishop it is at least half as long again. In the hand, the robust bill of Cuckoo Finch bites much harder than any bishop can bite! The inside of the upper jaw is thickened halfway in its length, reducing the inside of the mouth by more than half to the size of a large seed, perhaps to hold a seed within the palate groove. This thick lateral area is continuous with a bony ventral protuberance of the jugal bone (unpubl obs)[10], unlike any other finch I have seen


Straw-tailed
Whydah
V. fischeri
Steel-blue
Whydah
V. hypocherina
Shaft-tailed
Whydah
V. regia
Straw-tailed
Whydah
V. fischeri
Pin-tailed
Whydah
V. macroura
Cuckoo Finch
Anamalospiza
imberbis

except the red-and-black Thick-billed Seedeater *Pyrenestes ostrinus*. The lower jaw also is extremely flattened in its bony skeleton. The bill appears to be designed for cracking and crushing seeds. I watched Cuckoo Finches in a sunflower field near Pretoria, as they perched on stalks, pulled the seeds from the sunflower heads and cracked them open. More commonly they feed on grass seeds both fallen and on the stems[6]. Cuckoo Finches occur in flocks both in the dry season and during the rains, when singing males also space out and sing in wet grass and marshes, as at Belvedere marsh at Harare in Zimbabwe, and Lochinvar National Park in Zambia.

The nestlings have unmarked flesh-coloured mouth linings and are distinctive in the yellow interior to the broad edge of the upper and lower bill [5]. Juveniles are tawny brown, darker above and not heavily streaked, resembling the juvenile plumage of their host species such as Winding Cisticola *Cisticola galactotes*. The juvenile finches have rows of blackish scale-like tips to the crown feathers, and brown bills, as thick as the adults'.

Male display behaviour includes wing-flicking or fanning to a female, like a male weaver *Ploceus* displaying at its nest or a Straw-tailed Whydah displaying on its perch to a female(pers obs)[36]. The song is not well known and consists of chatters, swizzles and twitters[6]. There is no suggestion of song mimicry of the host species.

Cuckoo Finches are brood parasites on the grass warblers *Cisticola* and *Prinia*. Hosts that raise their young are Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridula*, Wing-snapping Cisticola *C. ayresii*, Pectoral-patch Cisticola *C. brunnescens*, Singing Cisticola *C. cantans*, Rattling Cisticola *C. chiniana*, Winding Cisticola *C. galactotes*, Fan-tailed Cisticola *C. juncidis* and Tinkling Cisticola *C. tinniens*, and Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans* and Tawny-flanked Prinia *P. subflava*[6,34,35]. Most of these live in wet grassy areas. These hosts feed their young with entire insects, rather than regurgitating seeds as do estrildid finches, weavers and euplectine finches, and the young are fed differently than are the young whydahs and indigobirds[10]. The host young do not survive in a nest where the Cuckoo Finch fledges and are apparently starved through competition, though two Cuckoo Finches sometimes survive to fledge[34]. Fledged young in the care of foster parents call *ticker...ticker* in the manner of adults, the foster parent responds to these calls and feeds the changeling, and the young do not mimic the begging calls of their hosts[35], unlike the whydahs and indigobirds. The parasites breed during the rains along with the warblers.

Relationships of the whydahs and Cuckoo Finch

The whydahs have usually been considered to be related to the Ploceidae or the Estrildidae finches, while the Cuckoo Finch has been thought to be independently derived from the ploceid weaver finches [10,32], and the alternate names 'Cuckoo-weaver' and 'Parasitic Weaver' imply this close relationship. However, there are anatomical similarities, including the shape of the vomer and the unpneumatized windows in the adult skull, that indicate a common ancestry between the Cuckoo Finch and the whydahs (unpubl. obs)[6,10]. Preliminary molecular genetics studies on mtDNA sequences also indicate that the Cuckoo Finch and the viduine whydahs and indigobirds are each others' closest relatives (M.D. Sorenson and R.B. Payne, unpubl obs) and are only distantly related to other finches. This observation suggests that brood parasitism evolved only once in the finches, and that it evolved long ago.

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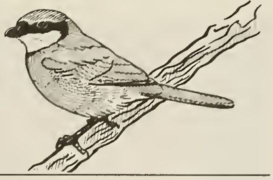
Discoveries



Notes on the possible breeding of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*

Uffe Gjol Sørensen, Jorgen Bech, Kaj Halberg, Erling Krabbe

One of many exciting experiences during a visit to Ethiopia in January–February 1996 was obtaining the first potential information on the breeding habits of the extremely range-restricted Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*. This came about through a chance meeting with local people while observing this rare bird. Through their assistance we were able to examine what was probably the first egg ever known to science.

On 29 January the morning was spent in a dried-out but luxuriously vegetated river-bed leading to the Genale River in Sidamo Province in southern Ethiopia (5°41'N, 39°32'E; altitude 1085 ± 97m). The site (subsequently called the Genale site) is a couple of kilometres south of the bridge over the Genale River on the road between Dello Mena and Negele, approximately 40 km due north of the town of Negele. Birdlife in the area is very rich, but late in the morning the adventures reached their climax as a single adult Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was located in a stand of tall fig trees (*Ficus* sp). At first the bird was actively feeding on figs, but it soon moved to a nearby fig-tree where for the next half hour or so it perched, fully exposed, on a branch just below the main canopy.

In the telescope this gave excellent views of the brilliant bird with its attractive palette of colours on the head: a prominent bleached out toupee with a slight reddish hue at the base, bordered by a narrow crimson patch on the nape. On the forehead a very delicate tinge of blue graded into the otherwise dark green face, a fresh green cheek, an intensely red bill and, most of all, a narrow crimson eyering lined above by an almost fluorescent crimson wattled eyelid — nicely lobed like an exaggerated eyelash and giving the bird a remarkable touch of the vulgar.

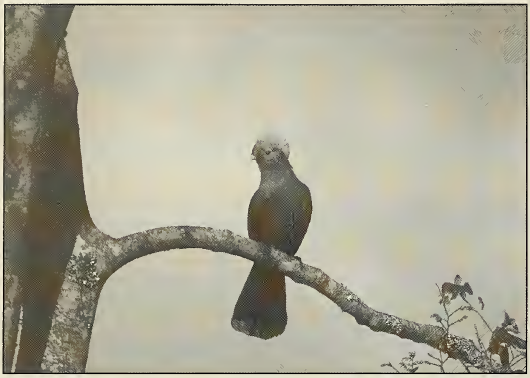
Amidst our excitement we were approached by a group of men from the nearby village. They had been watching us and were evidently wondering what we were doing. It seemed obvious to invite them to look through the telescope and after their first hesitatant attempts a new wave of collective excitement ensued beneath the fig-trees (Fig 1). The turaco was soon pointed out in our field-guide and a vivid discussion followed about birds in the area — page after page being checked, well known species being pointed out, calls imitated and heads shaken at the unfamiliar species. As is so often the case, these rural people easily recognised the local birds, and they were thrilled at seeing pictures of 'their' birds. With our driver as interpreter from English to Amharic and a young man from the group from Amharic to the local language we started to ask specific questions about the turaco.

The men were obviously familiar with the bird, and knew it as a permanent resident. The turaco was not on the 'other side' of the village (which is more open dry woodland), and they specified it was mainly found in 'trees with many leaves' (like the fig-trees and in contrast to the dominant *Acacia* woodland in the neighbourhood) and near to water (ie the river). They stated that the species's breeding season coincided with the date of our visit and the period December to February. (However their seeming precision on this point may have been more a consequence of our driver's interpretations.)

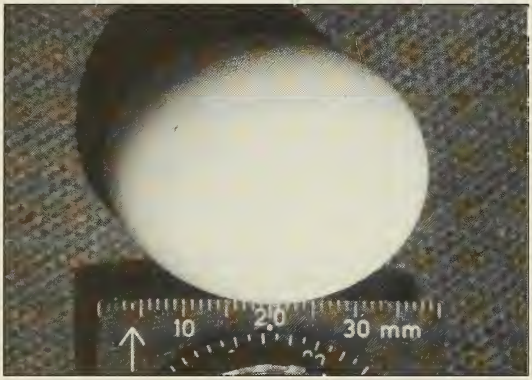
When discussing the breeding season it was mentioned that a man in the village had an egg of the bird! A messenger was sent and half an hour later the person arrived and suddenly we were holding what may well be the first egg of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco ever known to science (Fig 2). A round egg with the size 32.5mm x 38 mm. Colour was dull white with a very slight bluish tinge.

The exact location of the nest site is unknonwn, but the egg had been taken from a nest 'on a branch' the day before in a 'mountain area' two hours walk away (probably equal to 10–14 km) in an easterly direction from the Genale site. It was not possible to have the area better defined, but the description as a mountain area indicates a higher altitude than the Genale site.

The shape and size of the egg correspond well to eggs of other turacos[2-3]. Eggs of turacos are still only



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, 5km NW of Waddera, Sidamo Province, Ethiopia, 1996. (Alan Greensmith)



Probable egg of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* collected on 28 January 1996 by a local man on an unknown site north of Negele, Sidamo Province, Ethiopia. (Kaj Halberg)

poorly known and with only one specimen available it is not appropriate to expand the comparison beyond this general statement (M.P. Walters in litt).

The best evidence to indicate that this egg had actually been taken from a nest of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is the obvious local expertise and knowledge. The possibility of having been shown an egg from another species is of course theoretically possible, but based on the spontaneous development of our local contact this seems highly unlikely. A check of available information[2] reveals few alternatives. Most likely is the White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis*. However, this near endemic species to Ethiopia is not known in the areas north of Negele, although it is does occur sympatrically with Prince Ruspoli's Turaco at Wadera only 22 km west of the Genale site[1] (ie 30+ km west of the likely nest site). Another candidate could be the White-bellied Go-away Bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster*, which is common in southern Ethiopia and at the Genale site. Finally there are other birds with basically white eggs (doves, parrots, hornbills, owls, bee-eaters, hoopoes, rollers and woodpeckers), but most of these species normally have eggs of different shapes, either smaller or larger in size. Moreover some of these species nest in holes.

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is currently known from a few forest areas north and west of Negele and at Arero, where the species is reported from altitudes between 1275 and 1800 m[1,4]. Our record from the Genale site is from a lower altitude. The bird was silent during the observation and throughout the morning we did not hear any turaco-like calls in the area.

On the question of how many eggs of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco the man had collected, there was a laugh: 'Turaco eggs are very difficult to find and you have to be lucky — it is not something you just collect'. However, the turaco egg was believed to have medicinal value, and the man had collected the egg because someone else had asked for it. Unfortunately he could not describe exactly for what medicinal purpose the egg was used (probably a translation difficulty).

Owing to the obvious local interest in the egg we instantly decided not to try to obtain it — one market must be enough — and neither were we holding any formal Ethiopian permit for the collection of scientific material.

On the contrary, throughout our very friendly talks with the locals we explained that the turaco was 'their' bird of which they should be proud — and the more turacos the better.

Acknowledgements

Michael P. Walters (The Natural History Museum, Tring) is thanked for valuable comments on a draft of this note. Alem Birhan Kiros, driver from Experience Ethiopian Travel (Addis Ababa), is thanked not only for his valuable assistance as interpreter during this event but in general for his helpfulness and high spirits throughout our visit to Ethiopia.

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Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, a new species for Egypt and the African continent

Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din

In the late morning of 9 May 1996 we were watching hundreds of migrating raptors descending to drink at Bir El Ambagi, 7 km west of Quseir in the Eastern Desert. One bird, however, attracted our attention because of its bold, broadly banded, black and white tail and its relatively large size. Being aware of the recent occurrence of the Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* in the Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Israel and Saudi Arabia), and also the key identification features of *ptilorhynchus* as reviewed in recent literature[2], we immediately recognised the bird to be this species. The sighting represents the first record for Egypt and Africa and the second record for the Western Palearctic. The Crested Honey Buzzard was ascending with a mixed group, mostly Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, but also some Honey Buzzards *P. apivorus* and eagles, apparently after it had stopped to drink. From an altitude of about 70–80 m the bird rapidly gained height and vanished within about five minutes, joining a stream of birds moving in a northerly direction over the mountains.

Description

Size: larger than the adjacent Honey Buzzards and Buzzards.

Wings: broader than those of Honey Buzzard.

Underparts: body and underwing coverts buff wuth some faint dark barring. The rest of the underwing was whitish with barring across the flight feathers and a prominent dark trailing edge to the wing. No obvious carpal patch was noted.

Upperparts: briefly seen from a distance, the upperparts appeared greyish.

Head and Neck: the head was similar to the Honey Buzzard, but differed in possessing an incomplete, but very well–marked, dark brown gular gorget enclosing a pale buff throat.

Tail: shorter than Honey Buzzard. Pattern made up of three broad bands of equal width, two black (basal and terminal) and one white in the middle.

According to Forsman[2] the distinctive tail pattern and prominent dark trailing edge to the wing are characteristic of adult males of *P. ptilorhynchus.*

Crested Honey Buzzard is an Asiatic species breeding from far eastern Russia to Japan. It was previously regarded as conspecific with Honey Buzzard, but is now considered a separate species. The race *orientalis* is the most migratory form and is widely distributed in northern Asia, breeding as far east as southern Siberia. Birds of this form have been found in the autumn migrating through East Kazakhstan with Honey Buzzards, 2,000 km west of their regular breeding grounds[2]. The Egyptian record is most likely *P. p. orientalis*, the race recorded elsewhere in the Middle East.

The first record of the species in the Middle East was an adult male at Ras al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates on 16 December 1992[2]. Subsequently an adult male was photographed on 14 May 1994 in Eilat, Israel, migrating north with Honey Buzzards along the mountains near the border with Egypt. This constituted the first record for the Western Palearctic[3]. At Raydah in southwestern Saudi Arabia there were two juveniles on 11 October 1994[1]. These and the other records outside its normal range indicate that the species has a tendency to vagrancy.

The Egyptian sighting of Crested Honey Buzzard further confirms Forsman's conclusion that individuals of this species might regularly join flocks of Honey Buzzards wintering in Africa. Egypt is situated on the main migration routes of populations of Honey Buzzard wintering in central and southern Africa and breeding in eastern Europe and northwestern Asia. In the spring the peak passage through Egypt is in May when hundreds of thousands of Honey Buzzards travel from their winter quarters in Africa northward along the mountains of the Eastern Desert along the coast of the Red Sea. Most birds cross the Gulf of Suez, then travel north through southern Sinai and the Arava Valley (Eilat), while some continue north through Suez across northern Sinai.

We concur with Forsman's recommendations that this species should be looked for on the major flyways in Africa and the Middle East. Forsman should be credited for clarifying the identification marks of this species which might otherwise have been overlooked.

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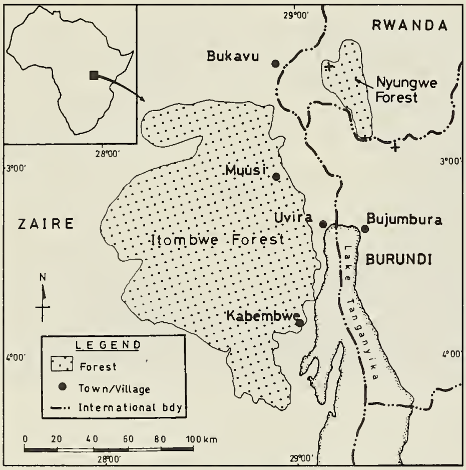
Rediscovery of the Congo Bay (Itombwe) Owl *Phodilus prigoginei*

Thomas M. Butynski, Upoki Agenonga, Bagurubumwe Ndera & John F. Hart

Identified from just a single skin obtained 45 years ago and not collected since, the Congo Bay Owl *Phodilus prigoginei* is one of Africa's least known birds. The type specimen, a female, was obtained in 1951 by Alexandre Prigogine's collectors at Muusi (3° 04'S; 28° 48'E, 2,430 m asl) on the Itombwe Massif off the north-west corner of Lake Tanganyika in eastern Zaire (see Map 1)[14,18]. This discovery is remarkable since it represents the only bay owl in Africa.



Map 1. Location of Itombwe forest.

Sometimes referred to as the Itombwe or Prigogine's Owl, the Congo Bay Owl, is one of only two species in the genus *Phodilus*, the other being the Oriental Bay Owl *P. badius*, a widespread but little-known lowland forest bird with a distribution from northern India to Borneo[1,2,8].

In addition to the Congo Bay Owl there are at least three other species of bird, all in monotypic genera, which are endemic to the Albertine Rift Afromontane Region and which are also believed to have their closest relatives in Asia[12]. These are the African Green Broadbill *Pseudocalyptomena graueria*, Grauer's Warbler *Graueria vittata* and Neumann's Short-tailed Warbler *Hemitesia neumanni*. Two other species with Asian affinities, the Congo Peacock *Afropavo congensis* and Latham's Forest Francolin *Francolinus lathami*, occur in the north-west part of Itombwe in transition forest[6,9,12,13]. The presence of these six species would seem to establish clear links with the Oriental avifauna — links that were broken during, if not earlier than, the Miocene[6].

Prigogine's collectors searched in vain from 1952 to 1964 for additional specimens of the Congo Bay Owl at Itombwe and in several other montane forests of the Albertine (Western) Rift. Many other attempts to locate it have also been unsuccessful. In 1974 L. and P. Browne sighted what may have been the species at 2,500 m in a small patch of forest on the Rwegura Tea Estate in Burundi[4,7]. In 1990, while in the Nyungwe Forest of south-west Rwanda at 2,000 m, R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire recorded what they strongly suspect to be the call of this owl[7]. Both of these records are from localities which are roughly 50 km across the Rift Valley from where the type was obtained (see Map 1).

Owing largely to the remoteness of the area and political disturbances, there has been little scientific work at Itombwe since the early 1960s. For four weeks in April and May 1996 we participated on The Wildlife Conservation Society's biological survey of southern Itombwe. The focus of this survey was on the birds and larger mammals, particularly Grauer's Gorillas *Gorilla gorilla graueri* and Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes schweinfurthi*. Most of the work was conducted in grassland, gallery montane forest, montane forest and bamboo forest at elevations ranging from 1,130 to 2,350 m.

Three weeks after entering Itombwe and sampling montane forest and bamboo forest, we established a camp about 1 km west of Kabembwe Village (see Map) (3° 52'S; 28° 56'E, 1,840 m) on the extreme south-east corner of Itombwe. This is an area of extensive gallery montane forest. To the north is a 400–500 km^2 tract of montane forest and to the south the gallery forest gives way to highland grassland and pasture. The area, to at least 1 km around the camp, was lightly to moderately disturbed as a result of the activities of wood-cutters, hunters, farmers and pastoralists. Most large trees suitable for lumber had been removed and few, if any, large mammals remained, cattle grazed the grasslands, fires were probably fairly frequently set in attempts to improve grazing, and a light scattering of old and new agricultural clearings was present.

On 1 May, a small owl was captured at 1,830 m in a mist-net placed about 50 m within fairly dense, slightly degraded forest. The owl was apparently flying about 1.3 m above the ground when it entered the net. The bird matched closely the description and measurements of the Congo Bay Owl[14,18,19]. Six photographs were sent to M. Louette in Tervuren, who examined them against the type specimen and confirmed that the captured bird was indeed the Congo Bay Owl.

The extremely beautiful, rich chestnut, buff, black and white bird had a well-developed brood patch and was presumably a female (the male of this species remains unknown). It was measured, weighed, described in detail, photographed, banded and released. The owl was 24 cm in length, had a wing-span of 63 cm, and weighed 195 g.

This record dispels the notion that the Congo Bay Owl is extinct. It also extends the species' known range southwards for approximately 95 km and the altitudinal range downwards by about 600 m. Prior to this capture there was speculation on whether the Congo Bay Owl was a forest or grassland species. We now know that it, at least sometimes, uses both habitats. It should also be noted that, upon release, the specimen flew about 50 m over 1 m tall grass and into gallery forest.

While there is no detailed description of the habitat in which the type was collected, we know that it was found at 14.00 hr sleeping in the grass of a mountain forest clearing at 2,430 m[13]. In Itombwe, the vegetation at this elevation is grassland/bamboo forest mosaic. Our specimen was obtained in montane gallery forest where the hilltops and upper slopes are covered with grass and light bush, and the lower slopes and valleys with montane forest. It appears that the Congo Bay Owl may be a species that requires a mosaic of grassland and forest (montane forest or bamboo forest), perhaps resting during the day in the grassland and hunting by night within the forest or on the forest edge.

Itombwe is the only forest in central Africa with a large area of highland grassland/forest/bamboo mosaic vegetation. This may explain why this owl is, thus far, known only from Itombwe. That several thousand square kilometres of Itombwe are covered with these mosaic vegetation types is encouraging for the survival of this owl. It is also encouraging that we netted it in a lightly disturbed area, which indicates that the bird will tolerate at least some human activity. It should also be noted that the habitat in which the species was obtained is similar to that in Nyungwe forest, where R.J. Dowsett and F. Dowsett-Lemaire suspect they heard the owl[7]. This gives additional hope that it may indeed be present at that site.

Prigogine[14] suggested that the Oriental Bay Owl and Congo Bay Owl are less closely related than was once thought. The Oriental Bay Owl is lighter in colour and has a less compressed bill, with larger feet and talons. It nests in large hollows in trees, where adults also rest during the day[1,2,8,11]. Unlike the Congo Bay Owl, it is apparently not known to occur above 1,500 m, to rest on the ground in grassland, or to be associated with grassland/forest mosaic vegetation types.

While working at Itombwe, one of us (TMB) searched most nights for nocturnal birds and mammals for 1–2 hours before dawn and 1–3 hours after dusk. Although several species of owl, nightjar and galago were heard and recorded, no calls were heard which might be attributed to the Congo Bay Owl.

Conservation importance of Itombwe

The part of Itombwe which is of conservation importance ranges in elevation from 600 to 3,470 m, covers roughly 16,000 km^2, and holds the largest tracts of transition forest, montane forest and bamboo in central Africa[15]. A total of 563 bird species are recorded for Itombwe[3,13,15,16,17]. Of these, about 60 percent are 'forest dependent'[13,17]. This makes Itombwe the richest single forest for birds in Africa[20]. In addition, Itombwe holds about half (83) the total number of montane bird species in the whole of Africa, at least 94 percent (98 of 104) of the bird species characteristic of the transition and montane forests of the Albertine (Western) Rift, and no less than 89 percent (34 of 38) of montane and transition-forest bird species endemic to the Albertine Rift[17]. The birds in this last category include three species listed in the Red Data Book as being of 'Indeterminate' status: Congo Bay Owl, Schouteden's Swift *Schoutedenapus schoutedeni*, Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*; there are also five 'Rare' species and nine species listed as either 'Of special concern' or 'Near-threatened'[4,10]. It is not surprising, therefore, that Itombwe is presently ranked as the single most important forest for bird conservation in continental Africa[5]. What is surprising, however, is that no part of Itombwe enjoys legal conservation status.

While large areas of all major vegetation types remain more or less intact in Itombwe, this forest is under increasing threat from pastoralists, farmers, pitsawyers, miners and hunters. The human population in the region continues to grow rapidly and thousands of refugees from Burundi and Rwanda live in camps at the base of Itombwe's eastern escarpment and to the north. Of particular concern is the rapidly advancing agricultural front we observed all along the southern and western edges of the gallery montane forest system, in which we found the Congo Bay Owl. This is the favoured habitat for conversion to pasture and to maize fields. The rate of conversion has obviously accelerated enormously in the last two years as famine, related to failing corn crops, forces people to open up much larger areas than was formerly the case.

Conservation action

Conservation action is needed in order to minimise, and eventually halt, the damage to the Itombwe Massif and its wildlife. Possible approaches to such action have been outlined by Prigogine[17] and Wilson and Catsis[20], and further discussions on this issue are now occurring in light of the current situation. Whatever approaches are chosen to help maintain the high conservation values of Itombwe, they must take into careful consideration the serious current political, economic, and security problems of the region, the needs of the dense human population which borders the Itombwe Massif, as well as those of the sparse human population within.

Regarding the particular needs of the Congo Bay Owl, the paucity of information on its distribution, numbers, ecology and behaviour remains one of the more serious obstacles to its conservation. The search for, and study of, this species in Itombwe and in other montane forests of the Albertine Rift must continue.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by The Wildlife Conservation Society. TMB's participation was supported by Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe and Zoo Atlanta. We thank Mr Omari Ilambu for leading the Itombwe survey, Dr Michel Louette for examining the type specimen at Tervuren, and the Institut Zairois pour la Conservation de la Nature for logistical support and for authorisation to work in Itombwe.

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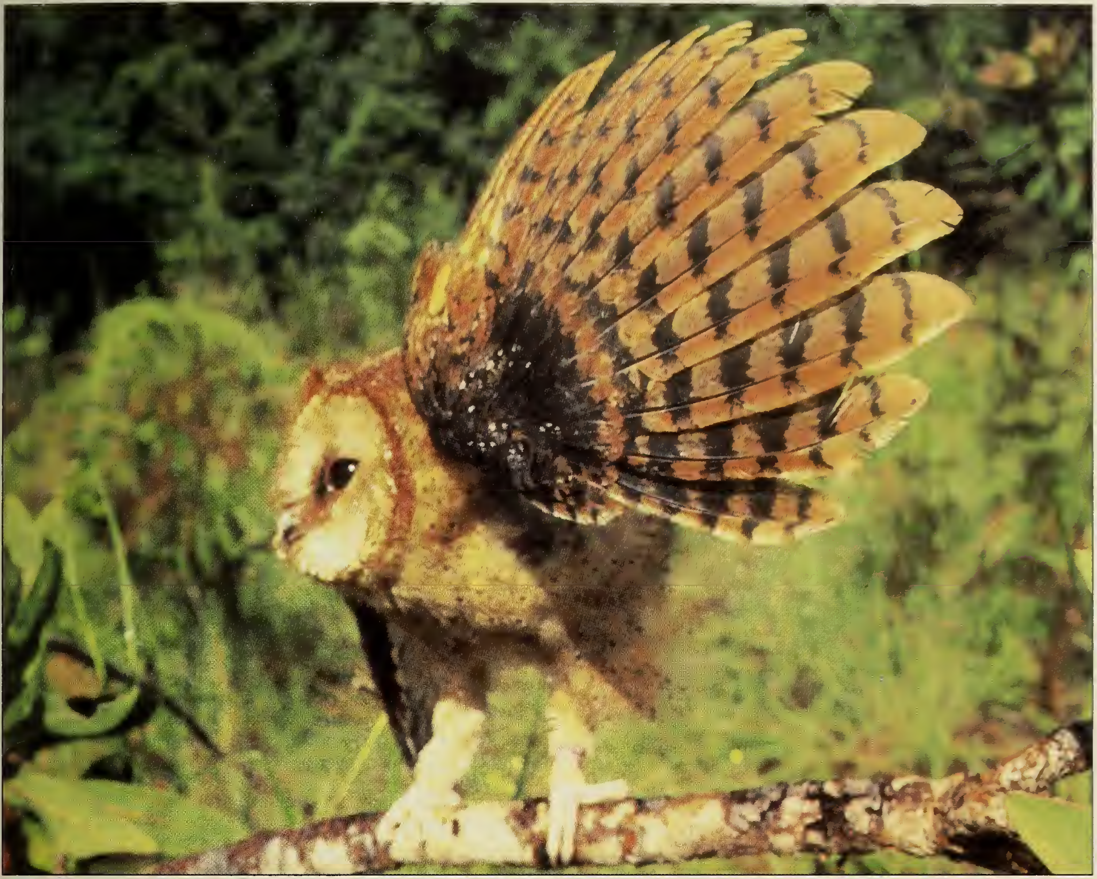
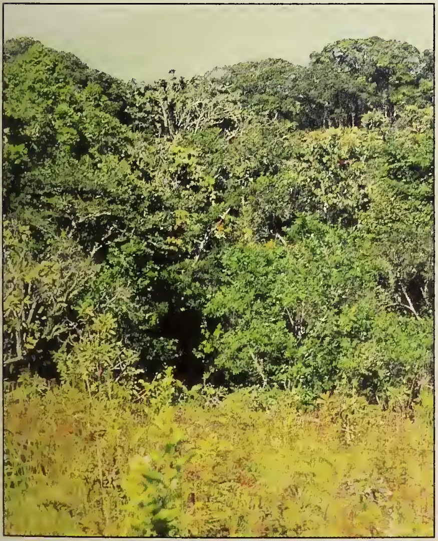
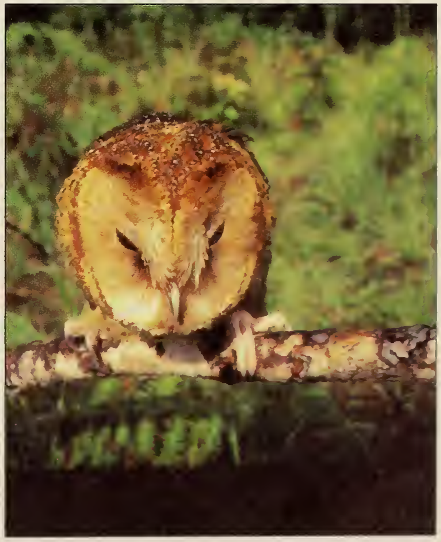


Congo Bay Owl, *Phodilus prigoginei* wing-stretching, Itombwe, May 1996 (T. Butynski).



Gallery Montane forest and highland savanna near Kabembwe, Itombwe Forest, in which Congo Bay Owl *Phodilus prigoginei* was captured (T. Butynski).



Head on portrait of Congo Bay Owl, *Phodilus prigoginei* Itombwe, May 1996 (T. Butynski).

Field identification and status of the sunbird asities *Neodrepanis* of Madagascar

Frank Hawkins[a], Roger Safford[b], Will Duckworth[c] and Mike Evans[d]

Summary: The genus *Neodrepanis* is endemic to the eastern rainforests of Madagascar, and is now considered to belong in the subfamily Philepittidae (asities) of the family Eurylaimidae (broadbills). It comprises two species, Common Sunbird Asity *N. coruscans* and Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity *N. hypoxantha*. The two species are best distinguished by differences in plumage (especially for males in breeding plumage) and calls. The eye-wattles, or caruncles, also differ. Common Sunbird Asity is generally common in lower montane forest and is known from many sites. Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity occurs at higher altitudes, typically in upper, or sclerophyllous, montane forest. It is locally common where its habitat survives, but suitable sites are widely scattered, so that the distribution of the species is highly fragmented. Little is known of the ecology of either species.

Introduction and history

Amongst the ornithological wonders of Madagascar is a genus of sunbird-like nectarivores, the sunbird asities *Neodrepanis*. Visitors to the island are often impressed by the beauty of the easily seen species, Common Sunbird Asity, but as the plates show, it looks almost dingy compared to the luminous brilliance of its much rarer congener, which is surely one of the world's most stunning birds.

Common Sunbird Asity was described in 1875 and considered to be a sunbird (Nectariniidae). A second species, Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, was described in 1933 from museum skins[16], having at the time never been knowingly observed in the field. Taxonomic review later showed that *Neodrepanis* is not a sunbird genus, but is closely related to another peculiar Malagasy endemic genus, the asities *Philepitta*[1]. The two genera formed the family Philepittidae. However, further studies have provided strong evidence that they should be considered a subfamily, Philepittinae, of the heterogeneous broadbill family, Eurylaimidae[14]. Not surprisingly given this history, various names have been suggested for the species of *Neodrepanis*. Their English generic name derives from the Malagasy name for the *Philepitta* species, while the scientific name draws attention to convergence with the Hawaiian honeycreepers (Drepanidini).

Many people know *N. coruscans* as either as Wattled Sunbird Asity, or merely Sunbird Asity, and *N. hypoxantha* as Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, even though both species have wattles and yellow bellies! Here, we follow Lambert, who coined the sensible name Common Sunbird Asity for the former[11].

In the absence of field observations of Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities, understanding of its status and field characters was for long based on only 13 old museum skins, none of which was supported by precise data on locality or altitude. However, clarification is now at hand, because the species has been observed frequently in recent years as more of the island's remote rainforests have been explored. We have seen and, in some cases trapped, this species at five sites since 1988; these records form the major basis of this review. Lambert and Woodcock give much information from an earlier version of this paper[11]. Here, we emphasise and elaborate certain details, and include the first published photographs and sonograms for either species.

Identification

The genus *Neodrepanis* is characterised by a tiny body with a short tail, a fine, strongly decurved bill and, during the breeding season, strong sexual dichromatism. Males in breeding plumage are brilliant blue and black above and variably bright yellow below, with extraordinary blue and green facial caruncles. Females, males in non-breeding plumage and immatures are dull blue-green above, lack caruncles and are variably yellowish below; some female-plumaged birds (at least for Common Sunbird Asity) have a half-sized caruncle and may be immature males. In winter, males are often seen with traces of breeding plumage coloration.

Males are easy to identify in breeding plumage. Male Common Sunbird Asities (Plate 1) are duller than Yellow-bellied in almost all respects. The former have brilliant royal blue-fringed back crown, nape, mantle and scapular feathers, and narrow but fairly conspicuous yellow fringes to the secondaries and greater and median wing coverts. Their underparts are dull, deep yellow, with strong olive-brown streaking in the centre of the breast; the flanks, belly and undertail coverts are unstreaked and somewhat brighter. The caruncle is almost square and turquoise-blue, rather greener around the eye. It extends only a short distance in front of the eye, and is not connected to the area of blue (basally) and green (distally) bare skin that overlies the basal quarter of the bill.

Male Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities in breeding plumage (Plate 2) have the crown, nape, mantle and scapular feathers all black, widely edged brilliant royal-blue. The wing feathers lack the yellow fringes shown by Common Sunbird Asity. The underparts are an intense buttercup yellow. The caruncle is larger and more corrugated than that of the Common Sunbird Asity, extending as far in front of the eye as behind, and joining (aside from a few bristly feathers on the lores) with the extensive blue (basally) and green (distally) bare skin on the basal half of the bill; it also projects further upwards, sometimes compressing the crown feathers into a kind of Mohican-style crest. It is royal blue around the edges, with turquoise spots on the elevated parts (notably on the lower margin, where the corrugations suggest a series of brilliant blue spots under the eye) and bright lime green in the middle.

Female and immature sunbird asities are more difficult to identify. The extent and intensity of the yellow are the best diagnostic plumage characters. In Common Sunbird Asity, yellow is confined to the flanks and undertail (sometimes including the belly), and is rather dull even there. The breast and throat are dull, pale olive, often with a tinge of yellow. Female and juvenile Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities usually have brighter yellow underparts, sometimes approaching the intensity and uniformity of males, but usually duller. The yellow is often most intense on the breast or throat. It appears that female Common Sunbird Asities are never bright yellow on the throat. AH has, however, seen Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities showing a pattern similar to Common Sunbird Asities, being rather dull olive-green tinged yellow on the throat and breast, but yellower on the flanks. Some such birds have narrow pale fringes to the greater and median coverts. These birds are presumably immatures, but the plumage sequences are not understood.

Structural characters of the two species are not particularly useful in identification. Common Sunbird Asities have longer and more decurved bills, but this difference is difficult to be sure of in the field. In addition, both species may perch with the tip of the tongue protruding from the bill, precluding accurate assessment of bill length. Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities appear smaller when the two species are seen side by side, but such a comparison is rarely possible.

A much more useful distinction is the call. The typical call of Common Sunbird Asity is an instantly recognisable burst of high-pitched (up to 8 kHz), vigorous notes, *see-see-see-see-see-see*. The sequence often starts at a rate of 5–8 notes per second but trails off with further, single or repeated notes of the same kind (Figure 1). Birds may call repeatedly from perches over periods of 10–20 minutes. This call is audible from 50–100 m, especially if there is no or little intervening vegetation.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities have a similar call, but the individual notes are much quieter squeaks, *pss* or *hss* (so quiet as to be difficult to tape-record) and are generally not delivered as a rapid series. When notes are repeated, the interval between them is typically longer: 0.25–0.8 s (Figure 2). The sonograms illustrate the typical calls of each species. Note, how-

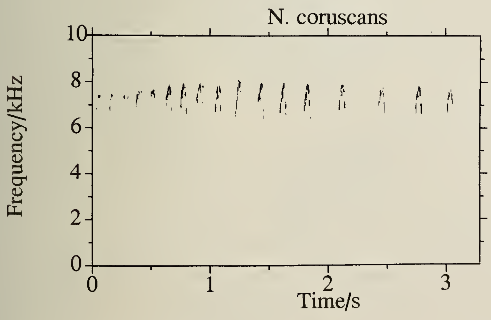


Figure 1. Sonogram of typical call of Common Sunbird Asity *Neodrepanis coruscans*, Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar, June 1993 (Recording: Roger Safford; analysed on Voice Identification RT1000 digital spectrograph).

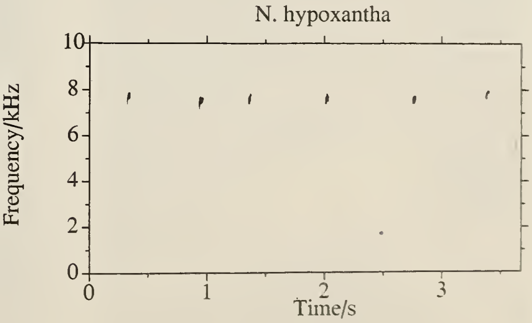


Figure 2. Sonogram of typical call of Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity *Neodrepanis hypoxantha*, Maharira (c 1,300 m above sea level), Ranomafana National Park, Madagascar, June 1993 (Recording: Roger Safford; analysed on Voice Identification RT1000 digital spectrograph)

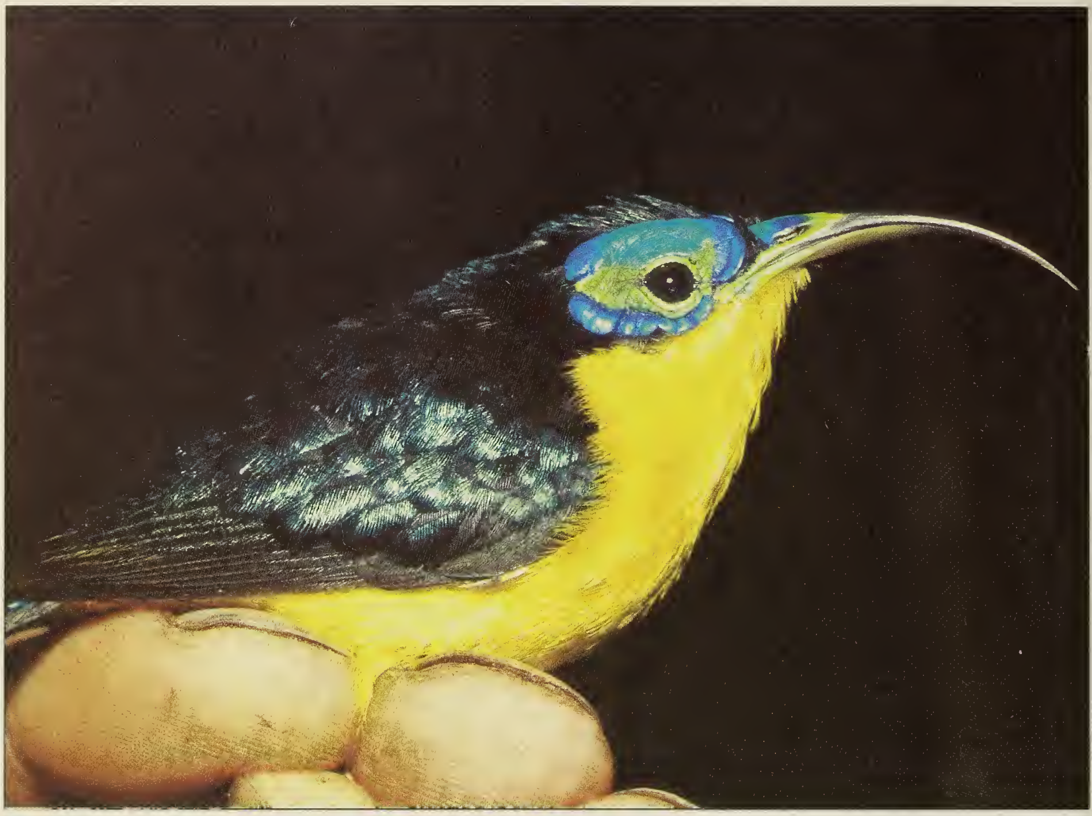


Plate 1. Male Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity *Neodrepanis hypoxantha*, Andohahela Strict Reserve, south-eastern Madagascar, November 1995 (Frank Hawkins).

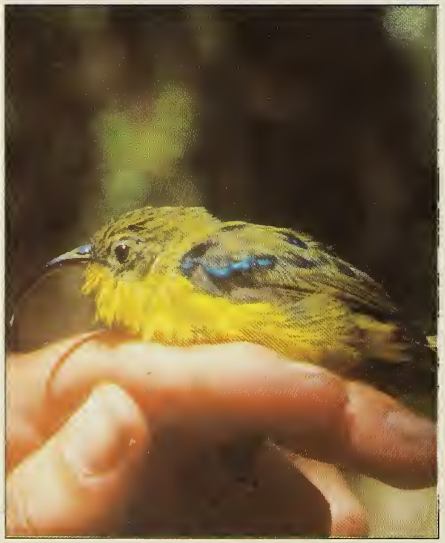


Plate 2. Probably sub-adult male Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, *Neodrepanis hypoxantha*, Andohahela Strict Reserve, south-eastern Madagascar, November 1995 (Frank Hawkins).

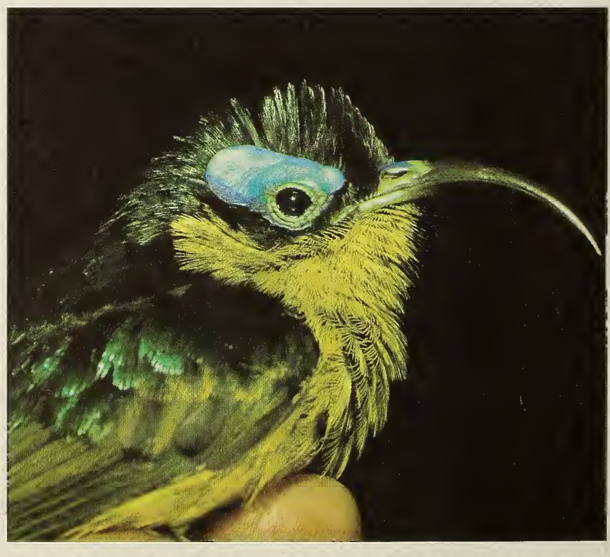


Plate 3. Adult male Common Sunbird Asity *Neodrepanis coruscans*, Anjanaharibe-sud Special Reserve, north-eastern Madagascar, November 1994 (Frank Hawkins).

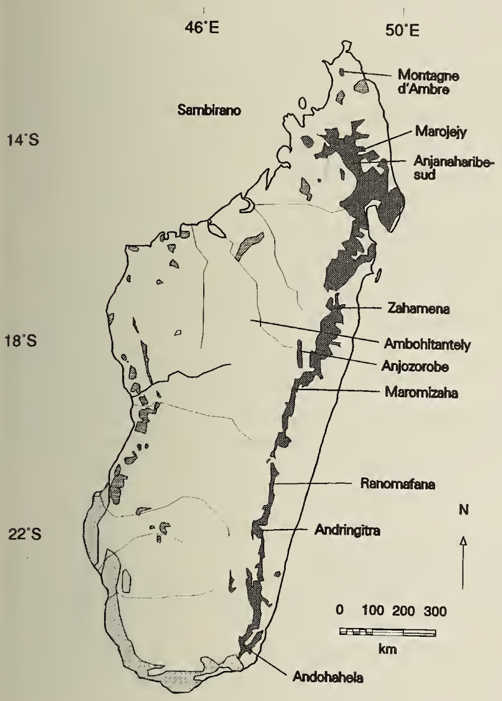


Figure 3. Map of Madagascar, showing primary forest and sites mentioned in the text.

ever, that Common Sunbird Asities sometimes give single notes, and Yellow-bellied may yet be found to utter a faster series. Copies of recordings of both species have been deposited at the National Sound Archive, Wildlife Section (London).

To sum up, male sunbird asities in breeding plumage should be easy to identify, especially by the presence or absence of yellow fringes on the wing feathers. Females, males in non-breeding plumage and immatures may be identifiable by the extent and shade of yellow on the underparts, but the variation in this character is not yet fully understood. Reports of Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities from new sites, especially if outside the currently known altitude range (see below), need careful assessment. Recordings of calls would greatly strengthen the case for such records.

Distribution and status

Common Sunbird Asity is common in nearly all mid-altitude (500–1,300 m) eastern Malagasy rainforest areas so far investigated, but has not been found in the Sambirano region or Montagne d'Ambre in the far north[12] (Figure 3). It is typically most abundant between about 800–1,200 m[10]. It tends to be scarce or absent between 0–500 m, and appears to drop out abruptly at around 1,200–1,400 m. So far Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity has only been found commonly above 1,200 m, and is typically most abundant between 1,400–2,000 m[10]. It has recently been recorded from (north to south) Marojejy Strict Reserve (1,500 m)[5,15], Anjanaharibe-sud Special Reserve (1,400–2,000 m)[9], Zahamena Strict Reserve (1,300–1,450 m) (FH pers obs), Ranomafana National Park (1,100–1,300 m) (RS pers obs, following reports from S. Malcomber, C. Hemingway and Loret Rasabo[13]), Andringitra Strict Reserve (1,350–2,200 m)[7] and Andohahela Strict Reserve (1,300–1,950 m)[6]. In all cases except Marojejy the species was common up to the limit of shrubby vegetation (more than 2 m high). There are occasional records of Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity at Vohiparara at 1,100 m in Ranomafana National Park (Loret Rasabo, P. Morris and B.E. Wright, pers comm), where the species is common in higher areas nearby. Reports from Maromizaha near Perinet-Analamazaotra Special Reserve are perfectly plausible but need to be published in view of past confusion at that site[11].

These altitudes are related to forest types. In very general terms, Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity inhabits upper (or sclerophyllous) montane forest, which is low-canopied and mossy, whereas Common Sunbird-Asity is found in lower (or moist) montane forest (sometimes called mid-altitude forest). In regions where both species occur together, there is a very sudden change in the species of *Neodrepanis* present, usually where these forest types intergrade. At the upper end of its altitude range, Common Sunbird Asity occupies the valleys, whereas Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity is present on the ridges, where the vegetation resembles that of higher altitudes. In other cases, for instance between 1,400–1,700 m in Andohahela, in rather dry forest in the rain shadow of the main escarpment, neither species of *Neodrepanis* was found[8]. To sum up, recent observations confirm the hitherto unsubstantiated suggestion that Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity is the highland counterpart of Common Sunbird Asity[4].

Both species of *Neodrepanis* appear to be rare or absent from the few highland forest relict patches on Madagascar's central plateau that have been surveyed. A single record of Common Sunbird Asity at about 1,300 m in Ambohitantely Special Reserve[2], one such isolated patch (by about 200 km), suggests either that this species can survive in small forest blocks for long periods at very low densities, or that it is capable of moving fairly long distances.

General habits

Both species feed on nectar and insects. A wide variety of plant genera have been recorded as nectar sources, and both species take a variety of arthropod prey. The latter is usually gleaned, although Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities sally for flying insects from the tops of low shrubs on mountain-tops, a marvellous sight in the low yellow light of evening.

Sunbird asities are very inquisitive. Males often approach to within 1 m to investigate an observer. This experience may only last one or two seconds, so photographers need to be fast on the shutter. In mid-altitude forest Common Sunbird Asities may be frustratingly difficult to see, since they are often high in the canopy and the call is difficult to place. A good strategy for seeing either species is to wait near clumps of flowers (particularly *Bakerella*, which looks like a large orange honeysuckle flower) at the forest edge. A close range visit by a male Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity is an unforgettable experience, particularly if the bird displays intently at intruders, calling vigorously and leaning far forward on the branch and lifting its head to display the caruncle and brilliant yellow throat. They seem especially attracted to observers up trees, although in low, mossy forest they may approach terrestrial observers with equal willingness.

Sunbird asities share with the *Philepitta* asities and the other broadbills the habit of placing near-spherical nests in understorey shrubs or low trees[8,12]. The sexual dichromatism and poorly understood displays of sunbird asities indicate some interesting social structure. In flight, the wings make a remarkably loud whirring (almost trilling) noise. This noise seems loudest in breeding-plumaged males and, to RS, also seemed louder in Yellow-bellied than in Common Sunbird Asity. It may be made by the needle-like first primary, which is only present in breeding-plumaged males and is longer in the Yellow-bellied species. Perhaps it is used in display. A fascinating study awaits the behavioural ecologist willing to invest some time in these species.

Conservation needs

On the basis of its apparent scarcity at Marojejy[5,15] and the fact that only 13 museum specimens had been collected before 1993, Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity was treated as endangered in *Birds to Watch 2*[3]. However, it is now clear that it is common within its limited altitudinal range. Its habitat area is certainly being reduced, but at least some populations are present in areas under no immediate threat from clearance. Common Sunbird Asity is present in almost all eastern rainforest reserves, and is most abundant in the altitude range where most rainforest remains, between 800–1,300 m. It is not, therefore, currently threatened with extinction.

However, deforestation is occurring along much of the eastern rainforest belt of Madagascar. Since both species occur in several protected areas, management of these, together with attempts to reduce the rate of deforestation throughout eastern Madagascar, must be the basis for their conservation, as is the case for many other species.

The distribution, altitudinal limits and conservation status of the sunbird asities are imperfectly known and, as for many other Malagasy species, knowledge of their ecology is largely anecdotal. Observers willing to go off the beaten track can make very significant discoveries. In particular, the forests on the upper edge of the eastern escarpment (near Anjozorobe, for instance) are little known and could repay further investigation by intrepid observers.

Acknowledgments

This paper is the result of fieldwork conducted under the auspices of many different organisations, including World Wide Fund for Nature (Madagascar) and Conservation International. We thank all these organisations for their support, and in particular to Steve Goodman for the chance to work in some of these areas. Permission to work on the birds of Madagascar was given by the Directorate of Waters and Forests, and by the National Association for the Management of Protected Areas (ANGAP). This paper benefited greatly from conversations and correspondence with Aristide Andrianarimisa, Steve Goodman, Claire Hemingway, Olivier Langrand, Frank Lambert and Simon Malcomber. Richard Ranft of the National Sound Archive, Wildlife Section, (London), prepared the sonograms.

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[b] *Royal Holloway Institute for Environmental Research, Huntersdale, Callow Hill, Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4LN, UK.*

[c] *East Redham Farm, Bank Road, Pilning, Bristol BS12 3JG, UK.*

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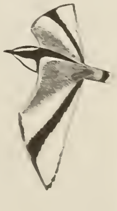

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Short Notes

Birding at the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, north-eastern Zaire

Marco Sacchi

The Okapi Wildlife Reserve is situated between 1°N–2°29'N and 28°E–29°4'E in north-eastern Zaire. The designated forest reserve covers an area of 13,500 km^2 and occurs between 700–1,000 m altitude. It consists predominantly of primary forest (90 percent) with some secondary forest, cultivation and waterways making up the remainder. Although the reserve is traversed by the trans-African highway access is not always straightforward. The reasons for this are the poor road conditions and lack of public transport. However, those who make it there, will be rewarded with some of the best birding Africa has to offer.

The reason for our visit was to conduct a ranger training programme in ornithology and herpetology. The aim was to train guides to enable them to organise birdwalks, as part of an interpretive programme for general tourists. After a few weeks attuning ourselves to this unique avifauna we started a three-week intensive training course with a group of local rangers. An introduction into the basic principles and methodology of ornithology was supplemented by practical training sessions in the field. During the excursions the emphasis was placed on correct identification, whereas in the theory sessions we tried to provide the participants with some background knowledge that allowed them to place the different species into an ecological context. We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and observation skills of the participants. The course turned out to be a great success, potentially providing the park with additional and much needed revenue from tourism.

Long-tailed Hawk
Urotriorchis macrourus
John Cox

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher
Halcyon badia
John Gale

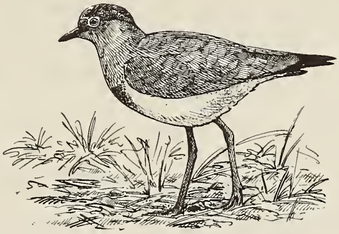
From Epulu, the park headquarters, we explored several habitat types such as the primary forest (composed of mixed species or dominated by *Gilbertiodendron* spp), secondary forest, cultivations and riverine habitat. The official park list totals an amazing 379 species, 30 of which we managed to add during our three-month stay at the reserve. This number is likely to rise as other observers venture into this part of the Ituri Forest. However, large tracts of the reserve still remain totally unexplored by birders, with less than 5 percent of the area having been visited.

The incredible species richness of the reserve's avifauna is not always obvious at first sight. It takes a few days and a lot of patience to spot the many shy and skulking species that make birding a challange. Of course there are also many conspicuous and ever present species like the Great Blue Turacos *Corythaeola cristata*, Palm-nut Vultures *Gypohierax angolensis*, Giant Kingfishers *Ceryle maxima* and the Rock Pratincoles *Glareola nuchalis*, that breed on the rocks in the Epulu River.

There is no room here to do justice to all the interesting species that we observed. However, I would like to mention a few that deserve attention. From the seven species recorded at the reserve that are listed in the IUCN Red Data Book, we managed to locate Yellow-legged Weaver *Ploceus flavipes*, Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* and Sassi's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus lorenzi* (the others being Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha*, Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani*, and Bedford's Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone bedfordi*). Furthermore we particularly enjoyed seeing Olive *Bostrychia olivacea* and Spot-breasted Ibis *B. rara*, Long-tailed Hawk, Cassin's Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus africanus*, a large flock of 56 roosting Brown-chested Wattled Plovers *Vanellus*

Yellow-legged Weaver *Ploceus flavipes*
Mark Andrews

superciliosus, Bare-cheeked Trogon *Apaloderma aequatoriale*, ten species of Kingfisher including White-bellied *Corythornis leucogaster*, Blue-breasted *Halcyon malimbica* and Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *H. badia*, Black *Merops gularis* and Blue-headed Bee-eater *M. muelleri*, seven species of Hornbill including White-thighed *Ceratogymna cylindricus albotibialis*, Piping *C. fistulator*, Black Casqued Wattled *C. atrata*, White-crested *Tockus albocristatus*, Black Dwarf *T. hartlaubi* and Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *T. camurus*, Green-breasted Pitta *Pitta reichenowi* and Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter*. An unusual sighting was a European Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* perched on a rainforest tree. We also observed a pair of Gosling's Apalis *Apalis goslingi* with two recently hatched young which, to our knowledge, represents a range-extension for this species. The observation of an immature Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* was further evidence that this species has started very recently to expand its winter range to tropical Africa.



Brown-chested Wattled Lapwing
Vanellus superciliosus
Mark Andrews

For those interested in this outstanding place, an annotated checklist of the avifauna of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve is currently being completed, covering all 379 species recorded to date. It will be available from November 1996 for UK£ 10/US$ 20 (cash; incl. postage and handling). It can be ordered from M. Sacchi, Breitfeldstrasse 44, CH-3014 Bern, Switzerland.

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Recent observations of birds in the Comoros

Jon Hornbuckle

Introduction

The Comoros islands, situated in the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and Tanzania, consist of the Islamic Republic of the Comoros and the French protectorate of Mayotte, but are rarely visited by birders. I spent two weeks there, from 3–16 November 1995, with Ashley Banwell, Neil Bostock and Alan Lewis. We made a number of interesting observations during our travels on Mayotte and the three main islands of the Comoros — Grand Comore, Anjouan and Moheli.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. A single bird seen on the 7th, 3–4 km offshore from Moheli near MíChaco, the rocky islet nesting site for Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*, and two noted on the crossing between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th appear to be only the second and third records for the Comoros[1].

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. c80 nesting at M' Chaco, some 5 km off the coast of Moheli, on the 7th.

Reunion (Malagasy) Harrier *Circus maillardi*. A pair above La Convalescence on Mt Karthala, Grand Comore on the 4th; at least 4 birds around Kangani on the 7th and one bird on the ridge above Fomboni, Moheli, on the 9th. These records indicate that this numerically scarce species may be fairly widespread.

Frances' Goshawk (Sparrowhawk) *Accipiter francesii*. Apart from a single record from Grand Comore, this species was only seen on Mayotte where there was a territorial pair and at least one other bird at Combani on the14–15th.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*. Singles at Moroni, Grand Comore on the 9th; Kangani, Moheli on the 7th, and Lac Dzialandze, Anjouan on the 12–13th. Three birds at Combani, Mayotte on the 14th are likely to have been on passage, presumably to Madagascar. The only previous confirmed records were two on Moroni in Nov 1831 and one on Mt Karthala on 8 April 1902.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*. One at Padmanzi Lagoon on the 15th appears to be the first record for Mayotte and only the third record for the Comoros[3].

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Two between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th appears to be the first record for the Comoros[3].

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus.* Common (500+) between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th and several Bridled/Sooty *S. fuscata* Terns offshore at Fomboni, Moheli on the 7th were presumably this species. The only recent record quoted by Louette is of 88 Bridled/Sooty Terns on the same crossing on 23 September 1983[3].

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus.* c20 between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th. Louette saw noddies but failed to identify them specifically, and so this appears to be the first definite record for the Comoros.

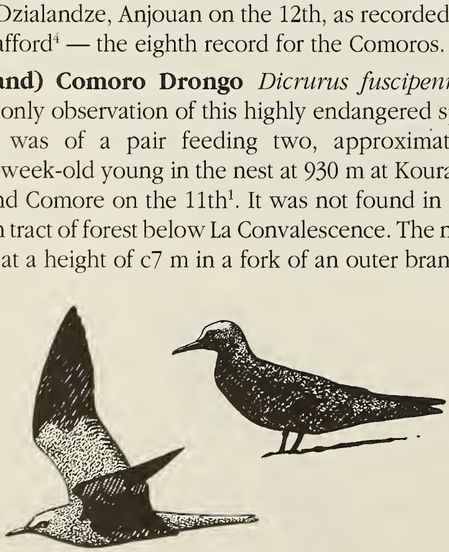
Malagasy Scops-Owl *Otus rutilus mayottensis.* Two were located in secondary, disturbed woodland near Combani, Mayotte on the 14th without much effort, indicating that the taxon is not uncommon and able to inhabit much of the habitat available on the island. It appeared distinct from the Madagascar mainland form.

Anjouan Scops-Owl *Otus capnodes.* Two, of different colour phases, were observed on the12th at night above Lac Dzialandze, possibly the first ever field studies, while at least two others were heard calling, mostly in flight[2].

Comoro (Karthala) Scops-Owl *Otus pauliani.* One seen but only one other heard at La Convalescence, Grand Comore on the 4th. Although there is still a substantial tract of montane forest on Mount Karthala, this could change since there is no evidence of it being protected.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus.* One at Lac Dzialandze, Anjouan on the 12th, as recorded by R. Safford[4] — the eighth record for the Comoros.

(Grand) Comoro Drongo *Dicrurus fuscipennis.* The only observation of this highly endangered species was of a pair feeding two, approximately one-week-old young in the nest at 930 m at Kourani, Grand Comore on the 11th[1]. It was not found in the main tract of forest below La Convalescence. The nest was at a height of c7 m in a fork of an outer branch. The male fed the female at the nest twice in 40 minutes and she fed the young.



Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*
Mark Andrews

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
John Cox

Mayotte Drongo *D. waldenii.* Eight at Combani, Mayotte, on the 14th included one on a nest in disturbed secondary woodland. This species appears to have adapted to human encroachment and so is not in the critical condition of the above species.

Grand Comoro (Humblot's) Flycatcher *Humblotia flavirostris.* Five in rainforest below La Convalescence, Grand Comore, on the 4–5th. These records suggest that this species is fairly numerous in its local and vulnerable habitat.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica.* One perched on electricity wires at Fomboni, Moheli, on the 8th appears to be only the second record for the Comoros, the first being two on Grand Comore on 22 October 1831.

Comoro (Karthala) White-eye *Zosterops mouroniensis.* Common in the tree heather above La Convalescence, Grand Comore, on the 4th, but a highly specialised and local habitat.

Moheli (Short-tailed) Brush-Warbler *Nesillas mariae.* A pair at 415 m above Fomboni, Moheli, on the 8th was the only record, suggesting that this species may possibly be in a more perilous situation than the 'Vulnerable' status currently accorded to it, especially since deforestation appears to be continuing apace[1].

We saw all the endemic taxa on the islands except for Francesí Goshawk *Accipiter francesii pusillus*, Madagascar Green-Pigeon *Treron australis griveaudi*, Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus potior*, Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina cinerea moheliensis* and Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascarinus bensoni.* It would have been easy to have missed the accipiter but the absence of the other four taxa suggests that they may be in a 'Vulnerable' or even 'Critical' condition.

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Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* and Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in Morocco

Mark Andrews

The River Sous on Morocco's Atlantic coast just south of Agadir is an important resting place for large numbers of waders, gulls and terns, especially during the migration period. Whilst visiting the area on 5 May 1995 I found that the incoming tide was bringing large numbers of waders, particularly *Calidris* sandpipers in summer plumage, to gather and feed in the narrow channels adjacent to the King's palace. Given the excellent light conditions and the birds' proximity, I positioned myself slightly upstream and sat and watched as the birds filtered down toward me. These were predominantly Little Stint *Calidris minuta* with smaller numbers of Dunlin *C. alpina* and Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*.

Amongst the beautifully rich and dapper Little Stints appeared a classically 'odd' bird, roughly the same size though bulkier with a shorter primary projection and slightly heavier, blunt-tipped bill. It lacked the warm 'foxy' colouration and showed no trace of the mantle braces so evident in its congeners. The combination of structure and plumage features meant the bird had to be an adult Semipalmated Sandpiper in breeding plumage, an age with which I was unfamiliar. My experience was based on observations of first-year birds in the UK. Having been disturbed by some over zealous horse riders the bird disappeared for a short while before I found it once again feeding amongst the Little Stint and took the following notes.

Structure

Slightly bulkier, more pot-bellied than accompanying Little Stints with an obviously shorter primary projection.

Bare parts

Bill: black, heavier with a much stouter base and a classic 'blob' tip.

Legs: black, distinct palmations between outer and middle toes very difficult to see except as the bird walked toward observer pausing momentarily.

Plumage

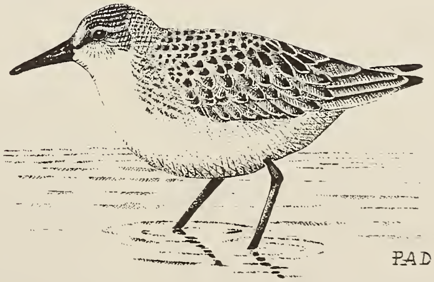
Head: crown streaking appeared darker over the buff ground colour and gave a slight 'capped' appearance. Lores and ear coverts darker with more diffuse smudging. Supercilium to nape whiter with distinctly more pronounced sooty streaking.

Upperparts: generally dull looking with the ground colour of the mantle slightly 'buffy' but lacking any warm rufous tones. Distinctly pale-centred coverts lacking rufous fringes and contrasting sharply with dark centred scapulars. Rather plain sooty-grey-centred tertials with pale off-white fringes. Primaries black.

Underparts: White with distinctly streaked breast and foreflanks.

No call was heard since the bird was never isolated from the main group of waders.

In attempting later to relocate the bird for colleagues, I noticed a sudden splash nearby that diverted our attention. After bathing frantically in a small muddy pool some 10 m away, a small dark wader emerged onto dry land. It was a stunning Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in full breeding plumage. The magic of vagrancy!



Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
Pete Dennis

Structure

Very similar to Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos* in appearance though distinctly shorter tailed, creating a much more compact, neat bird. Bill in comparison with Common Sandpiper was perhaps longer and slightly drooping.

Bare parts

Bill: flesh coloured with a dark tip.
legs: flesh coloured.

Plumage

Generally slightly darker greyer brown than Common Sandpiper (although the bird was wet, which will probably have increased the impression of a dark appearance) with a more pronounced supercilium and heavily black-spotted underparts.

Discussion

The former constitutes the second record for mainland Africa if accepted and the latter possibly the second or third record[1]. The occurrence of two vagrant Nearctic waders at the same location at the same time with an adult summer Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* found at Oued Massa on the same day during a period of strong westerly winds, suggests the likelihood of their recent arrival. However, the possibility of west-to-east vagrancy across the south Atlantic during spring (ie South America to West Africa) and then northward movement up the east Atlantic seaboard is also quite feasible.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Duncan Macdonald and Joseph Thompson for the opportunity to visit this fascinating country once again.

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Letters

Grey-necked Picathartes

May I comment on the distribution of the Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in Cameroon in the recent past, and correct a misconception which has crept into Green's paper in *Bull.ABC* of August 1995[2].

Collar & Stuart[1] presented a comprehensive review of the distribution of the species in SW Cameroon and Thompson & Fotso[5] comment on the fragility of the fragmented populations of *Picathartes* spp in Cameroon and Sierra Leone.

In the introduction of Green[2] reference is made to three populations of *Picathartes oreas*: that within Korup National Park, in the adjacent Cross River National Park in Nigeria and, incorrectly, 'near Mamfe in Cameroon' in Moore[3].

There are several recent records from Mamfe, which is 100 kms NE of Korup, for example Serle in 1952 and 1954, Golding in 1968 and Eisentraut in 1973 all cited by Collar & Stuart[1], but the breeding colony described in Moore[3] was much closer to Koroup, in the Meme Division of Cameroon, 75 kms SE of Korup. The two colonies were found in caves near Lake Barombi Mbo at Kumba. (Their exact locality was not disclosed in 1974, because of unauthorised collecting in Cameroon at that time.)

Until the 1960s the population extended right across the Southwest Province of Cameroon from Mount Kupe to the Nigerian border. Serle considered *P. oreas* to be rather sedentary (pers. comm. 1975) and the destruction of the forest by road building and timber extraction to the east and north of Kumba, together with rapid urban expansion from that time, is likely to have isolated the eastern, Mount Kupe, population.

The population to the west of Kumba is probably larger than is presently realised. There is suitable habitat throughout the Rumpi Hills, north of Korup, reaching the Nigerian border and it seems likely that breeding colonies will be found there.

Picathartes oreas are surprisingly difficult to see in the forest away from the breeding sites. Reichenow[4], in his description of the type specimen taken at Victor was, even then, a very well worked area.

My thanks are due to Dr Walter Thiede for translating Reichenow's description of *Picathartes oreas* into English for me.

1. Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened birds of Africa and its Islands.* ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book. Cambridge: ICBP.
2. Green, A.A. 1995. Finding Grey-necked Picathartes in Korup National Park, Cameroon. *Bull. ABC* 2: 101-102.
3. Moore, A. 1974. Cameroon Bare-headed Rockfowl. *Nigerian Field* 39: 188-190.
4. Reichenow, A. 1899. Neu endeckte Arten von Kamerun. *Orn. Monatsber* 7: 40-41.
5. Thompson, H. & Fotso, R. 1995. Rockfowl, the genus *Picathartes. Bull. ABC* 2: 25-29.

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Reviews

Nesting Birds. The breeding habits of southern African birds.

Peter Steyn. 1996. Fernwood Press, Vlaeberg. 240 pages, many colour photographs. 1–874950–15–6 (Standard Edition).

First impressions suggest this is a coffee table picture book. It is large (page size 30 cm high x 23 cm wide) and has an abundance of colour photographs. However, a closer look shows that it is very much more than that. The text describes in some detail the breeding habits of every group, although not every species, of bird occurring in the southern African subregion.

The photographs are mostly superb. The majority are by Peter Steyn himself but he has used images by over 30 other photographers to fill in where necessary. About half of every double-page spread is devoted to photographs, some inevitably fairly small, but every ten or so spreads there is a full page photograph. The majority are portraits of representative species of the group at the nest, together with some of the nests and eggs.

The book should also be read or at least dipped into on a regular basis. The 20-page introduction is a general but informative essay on breeding systems, the breeding cycle and the different nest types shown by the birds of the region. There is then a 1–5 page section on the habits of each of 90 or so groups. Mostly these are families, but some of the larger ones are split into two or more, while a few smaller ones are amalgamated. These essays summarise what is known in an easy style, but they emphasise the important and interesting aspects of the biology of the group and their nesting and breeding habits. References are not quoted explicitly in the text but there is a large bibliography demarcated into sections following the text sections, and many references are to the original sources and not to general summaries and reviews.

For a non–South African a very minor quibble is that to discover scientific names the reader must refer to the index. However the English names used are almost all those in the latest (1993) edition of *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*, so there should be no problem in finding out which species is being referred to. I am pleased to note too that the author has put hyphens into names like Racket–tailed Roller, unlike most South Africans!

In summary, if scientists need to find out about breeding in any bird group in southern Africa this is an excellent place to start. If someone wants to see splendid pictures of southern African birds with a text of more than the 'This is species x' variety then this is also an excellent buy.

Peter Lack

Swaziland bird atlas 1985 – 1991

Vincent Parker. 1994. 274 pages. Softback, 'Perfect' bound. Websters, Mbabane, Swaziland. ISBN 0–7978–0396–3. E 80/–.

The Swaziland Bird Atlas is unique, I believe, in three ways: the small grid squares (compared with other African bird atlases), the depth and consistency of coverage and, not least, because almost all of the fieldwork was carried out by the author himself. The atlas plots the distribution of a remarkable 489 species recorded between 1985 and 1991 including such local species as Blue Swallow and Pink-throated Twinspot.

Swaziland is a small country of only 17,360 km^2. The size of the country permitted the use of a one-eighth degree square grid (approximately 12.5 x 12.5 km), rather than the one quarter degree square employed in the southern African and Kenyan atlases. In the introduction the author demonstrates the value of the finer grid by plotting the distribution of the Fiscal Shrike and the Long-tailed Shrike on both scales. The coarser scale obscures the difference between the Knobthorn-Marula savanna of the eastern lowveld and the more mixed savanna of the western, giving the impression that the two species overlap in much of their range in Swaziland which, in fact, is not the case. A similar comparison for the Water Dikkop shows how closely its distribution is tied to major rivers, a fact that the quarter degree square fails to demonstrate.

Swaziland conveniently divides into 100 one-eighth degree squares. One of the remarkable achievements of the author was to visit each square at least once for a minimum of five hours in each month of the year. This give the atlas a rare conformity of coverage suggesting that gaps in a species plotted distribution are real, rather than quirks of reporting, and provides a comprehensive picture of seasonal movements for migrant species.

An introduction section of 17 pages discusses the methods employed and the results. Maps are provided showing the major towns and rivers, topography and vegetation and rainfall. A chart details the number of species recorded in each square for each month and in total, the highest score of 300 species going to Big Bend on the Usuthu River in the southern lowveld. An interesting analysis shows that, while Swaziland's political borders seem at first like an eccentric colonial carve-up, they in fact coincide with the range boundaries of a surprising number of species.

There follows the main bulk of the work comprising the account and distribution map for each of the 489 species recorded, two species being treated on an A4 page. The taxonomy follows Roberts' *Birds of Southern Africa* (1985). For each species the author provides one of two types of distribution map (discussed below), its Roberts' number, English and scientific name, the number of times it was recorded out of 2,263 grid visit cards, an estimate of the number of breeding individuals in Swaziland and a brief description of its status and habitat preferences. If I have one criticism it is the brevity of the habitat preference section. Typically this runs to less than ten words and an opportunity to describe each species's habitat requirements in more detail has perhaps been lost. This information has considerable conservation value and could help provide clues to future changes in Swazi bird distribution. The population estimate seems somewhat arbitrary, but the attempt to put an exact figure on a population rather than place it in a broad band can only be admired. With the exception of a few censused populations, such as the Blue Swallow, the population figure is calculated by multiplying a rough estimate of the species density by the estimated area of suitable habitat. The author comments that he has erred on the side of caution and that most populations are probably larger than given.

Two types of map are used in the species accounts. For migrant species each grid square contains a circle divided into 12 segments, for the months of the year, the months in which the species was recorded being blacked out. This treatment clearly demonstrates the seasonal movements of Palearctic non-breeding and intra-African migrants. For example the map for Common Buzzard, a very common non-breeding visitor, shows the earliest arrivals reaching Swaziland in October with the majority of highveld squares occupied by November. Most squares are deserted by February. The map clearly demonstrates the species's preference for higher altitude, with a much briefer and more patchy distribution in the lowveld, especially in the north.

A resident species's presence in a given square is represented by dots of varying size, proportional to the recording rate within that square. The recording rate represents the percentage of months in which the species was recorded, not the commonly used proportion of times recorded in the square. This interpretation is used because 'many species showed significantly lower recording rates for those grid units for which there were a large number of field cards because many such field cards had relatively low species totals'. The author argues that this approach eliminates this bias, but readers accustomed to interpreting abundance of a species by size of dot need to be wary.

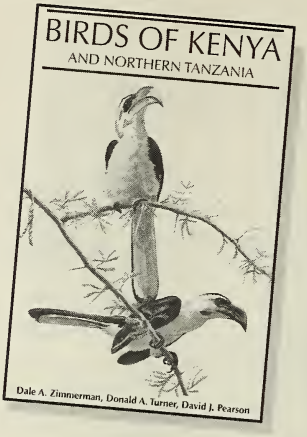
This atlas provides an accurate picture of Swazi bird distribution correcting many errors and false assumptions (perhaps in a few cases reflecting true change) in such standard works as Roberts, though perhaps it is not fair to compare a national atlas with a regional handbook, whose remit is much broader. It also provides valuable information on the conservation status of 54 endangered, vulnerable, rare or regionally rare species, of which Cape Vulture, Kori Bustard and Pel's Fishing Owl were found to be extinct as breeders in Swaziland.

I highly recommend the book as a very valuable contribution to African bird distribution. Needless to say it is essential reading to anyone living in or visiting this small but attractive and ornithologically rich country. I congratulate the author for his monumental task and the Conservation Trust of Swaziland for their vision in sponsoring the work.

Peregrine Rowse

Birds of Kenya and northern Tanzania

Dale A. Zimmerman, Donald A. Turner & David J. Pearson. Christopher Helm, A. & C. Black. 740 pages, 124 colour plates and 19 black-and-white pages of photographs. £40.



According to the poet Keats, who knew about these matters, a thing of beauty is a joy for ever. For those lucky enough to possess it, this splendid book is likely to be a joy, if not for ever, then for as long as as can reasonably be expected in this changing world. East African birders, rendered parched and gasping by a 30-year drought of field guides, might be expected to fall upon almost any new bird book with the enthusiasm of the seriously dehydrated for a sparkling pool of spring water. When the spring actually turns out to be bubbling with vintage champagne the whole experience is likely to go a little to one's head.

Well: before proceeding, let sober calm return. And appropriately so, since this is a very serious-minded book, the foster child of silence and time — it was a whole eleven years in the making. It is dedicated to the memories of no lesser luminaries than Sir Frederick Jackson, Victor Gurner Logan van Someren and Reginald E. Moreau.

Unremitting seriousness might sound tiresome, but in this case it is, I believe, an excellent thing. This book succeeds so brilliantly because it tries to do things properly and takes no short cuts. Essentially it is a field handbook to the 1,114 species found in Kenya, and northern Tanzania south to 5°30' S and west to about the longitude of Mwanza, an area which includes the Tanzanian National Parks that are most popular with visitors. No doubt these boundaries were dictated largely by commercial concerns, but they make biogeographical sense as well, apart from the intrusion of the Usambara Mountains, with its eastern arc forest birds. The avifaunas of northern Tanzania and southern Kenya have a great deal in common.

Perhaps footbook would be a better term for this size of a text. Although the authors expressly state that it is intended for use in the field anyone lugging it about with them will develop a Schwarzenegger-like physique, or alternatively a hernia. But, as Keats never seems to have said, there is no such thing as a free lunch. If you want information you have to put up with the size and weight. The construction is robust enough to take some field wear and tear particularly if you add one of the tough protective covers already being manufactured by various local companies in East Africa. I imagine I will not end up taking my own copy into the field but keeping it for handy end-of-day reference in a car or tent.

So what does all this bulk consist of? The text begins with a concise but useful introduction explaining the layout of the book, giving a helpful guide to the region and its habitats and general tips on finding and identifying the birds, and a very clear and comprehensive glossary. This last is important since the text makes no concession to lack of technical knowledge. There is a fine set of black and white habitat photographs, the best I have seen in any book on East Africa.

Then come the colour plates. Seventy-nine of these are by Dale Zimmerman, a gigantic piece of work. Sadly, eye problems meant that Zimmerman could not complete the set, and Ian Willis and H. Douglas Pratt were drafted in to finish the remaining 45 plates. Collectively these illustrations are not only a staggering improvement on what has been available for the region in the past they are world class and able to hold their own against any. Design and layout have been done with great care balancing aesthetic considerations with the constraints of a field-guide format. There is a free use of partial portraits, overlapped illustrations and scaled down flight figures to show off distinctive features and plumages, and a large number of poorly known and less commonly seen adult and subadult plumages, many never illustrated before, have been included. Needless to say this is enormously helpful.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the plates is their exceptional accuracy and attention to detail. Although the Introduction warns about shifting colours, for once the printers seem to have done the artists justice and the top quality paper obviously helps. This is especially impressive for some of the more subtly coloured species. I had almost despaired of ever seeing an accurately printed plate of pycnonotids, but Plate 76 in this book has greenbuls to die for. Wonderful.

Superlatives do not apply everywhere. All the passerine plates are by Dale Zimmerman, and most of these are excellent. Even so I find some of his birds a touch too reptilian for my taste — all claws and beaks and beady eyes. There has already been muttering from colleagues about the legs of some species, which often seem excessively spindly and stuck on at odd angles. The glossy starlings, while accurate enough, and I guess that is what counts, are distinctly odd. I am not sure I would like to encounter any of them on a dark night,even the innocent-looking but apparently free-falling Ruppell's Long-tailed. Zimmerman's non-passerine plates, painted later than the others, are a mixed bag. I thought the swifts and bustards just about adequate, for instance, whereas the coucals and large plovers are much more impressive.

The plates by Willis and Pratt, mainly waterbirds and raptors, range from good to very good. There are a few surprising omissions: for example, almost no ducks in flight and disappointingly little on winter-plumage terns, but in a sense these illustrations are less important. Excellent depictions of most of these groups, though not perhaps the wintering terns, can already be found in South African and European field guides, and in the *Birds of Africa*.

Opposite each plate are short notes for each species, concisely giving status, distribution and key identification features, as well as a page number reference for the main text. Following this up leads to a compact but detailed species account. The descriptions are clear and comprehensive and, where appropriate, giving details for different races and plumages; key identifiation features are helpfully italicised. Sections on voice, habits, similar species and status and distribution complete each account. There is a small but accurate and useful distribution map for each species with breeding and non-breeding ranges distinguished, though it might have helped to have a few more points to orient oneself by: only the two main east-flowing rivers are shown. Overall these accounts are models of their type and contain a huge amount of information. Even if you can identify a bird straight away from its illustration you will learn a great deal from reading the text.

A descriptive account at the beginning of each bird family gives general information on its characteristics, taxonomy, habits, status in the region and identification. Other nice touches are the detailed treatment of cisticola identification, comparative wing outlines of some difficult species, in case you have them in the hand, and a scattering of line drawings illustrating particular points. I particularly liked the pages describing and illustrating typical nests of different weaver species, though these are not unfortunately cross-referenced to the text.

Taxonomy and nomenclature follow the new East African list, and are thus completely up to date. Some names will be new and unfamiliar to many readers. Alternative English names are given where they are in common use, and the indexes are well constructed and will help. One really new and helpful feature of the book, at least for the serious observer, is its thorough treatment of subspecies, giving clear descriptions of plumage differences and ranges.

I have a few minor quibbles. The maps in the Introduction are rather small and confusing. It would have been clearer to show the actual features that the numbers on each map refer to, though the map on the frontispiece has just about everything on it anyway. It seems a pity that the species only found in northern Tanzania have been shunted off into exile on the last three plates, a decision that pays respect to political rather than biogeographic boundaries. Presumably the authors decided to include this area when it was too late to alter the other plates. It would have been good to see some information on local ornithological societies and institutions especially for those who might want to report unusual or interesting sightings.

The text is generally very accurate. After an intensive search I did manage to find a couple of tiny errors (on page 569, compared above should be compared below, for example) but these are really entirely trivial.

It is an expensive book, but worth every shilling. It is actually very good value for money. Unfortunately the high price will clearly put the text out of reach for many young, aspiring birders. Perhaps ways can be found to make it accessible to the wide audience it deserves.

It should be clear by now that any serious observer will want to rush out and buy this book. Is it also a book for beginners or those who just take a mild interest in birding? I think the answer is definitely yes: this will be an essential text whatever the level of your knowledge or expertise. It's easy to access the illustrations and key identification features, while a wealth of more detailed information is available for those who require it. Anyone using this book, at whatever level, will find it a source of valuable and pleasurable instruction.

This text puts Kenyan ornithology on a solid footing for the next millenium. It is a highly unusual and dazzlingly successful combination of meticulous science, artistic flair and vast field experience, the distillation of not one but three lifetimes in ornithology. All of us who care about the regions birds owe grateful thanks to Dale, Don and David. We are remarkably lucky.

Leon Bennun

Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records mainly covering the previous six months. We urge that contributors submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to Dowsett, R.J. & A.D. Forbes-Watson *Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions* or more recent relevant literature before submitting records.

Botswana

An **African Open-bill Stork** *Anastomus lamelligerus* at Gaborone on 17 February 1996 was unusually far south. Four pairs of **Wattled Crane** *Bugeranus carunculatus* were found near Chief's Island in August while a total of 208 were found in the north of the Okavango Delta on 1 November. Six **Grey Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum* were at Nata Sanctuary, Makgadikagadi Pans on 24 October. Two **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* were seen on the Marico River c 70 km north of Gaborone on 18 August with further sightings on different stretches of the river on 9 November represent the most southerly records for the country. Two **Denham's Bustards** *Neotis denhami* at Nata Sanctuary on 10 September were well to the south of previous records. A **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* in Khutse GR on 16 November was unusual as were two **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* there on the same date. A **Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was mist-netted at Phakalane on the early date of 2 November *(all per ST)*.

Egypt

Four adults and a juvenile **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* were at Abu Simbel 9–11 September where seven adult **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were also present on 9 September. An adult female **Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* was at Hurghada on 5 September, a female **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* and 10 **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* were found at a day roost at Abu Simbel on 11 September. A first-winter **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was photographed at Abu Simbel on 9 September. A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* was seen well at Abu Simbel on 11 September and 10 **Streaked Weavers** *Ploceus manyar* including a juvenile, were at Abu Grida on 17 September *(all VS)*. Further noteworthy records were seven **Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* sitting on a large buoy on Lake Nasser to the north of Abu Simbel on 27 October, a return of birds to the area after none in last two years. A **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* a scarce winter visitor, was on the River Nile at Esna on 30 October. A **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* was seen near Qusier on 9 May, while a **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* the first record for Egypt, was reported from near Quseir that day. 670 **Levant Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter brevipes* flew out into the Red Sea over Ras Mohammed on 5 October with a further 35 on 6 October. This is the first evidence of a substantial autumn passage and possible autumn route through Egypt. An interesting movement of **Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* was noted at Ras Mohammed on 5 October when over a period of three hours, a total of 465 birds drifted south to south-west out into the Red Sea, only to return later and then move north along the western shore/mountains of south Sinai, this is the largest autumn day count for Egypt. 7,280 **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* flew north near Zafarana in two hours on 14th March. Five **White-tailed Plovers** *Vanellus leucurus* were at Crocodile Island, Luxor, on 28 January 1996 and singles were at Suez on 12th September and at Sharm el Sheikh between 4 and 6 October. There were 3 possible sightings of **Saunders' Little Tern** *Sterna saundersi* in northern Red Sea off the Egyptian coast between 13 and 18 July, while two **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* on Tawila Island in northern Red Sea on 16 July, will be first for Egypt if accepted. Two different **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* chicks being fed at **Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone cornix* nests near Aswan in late March, represent the first recorded breeding for 10 years. A pair of **Hume's Tawny Owl** *Strix butleri* were calling and seen at Wadi Feiran on 25 April. Single **Isabelline Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus* were seen at Wadi Kid in Sinai on 29 March and near Quseir on 9 May. **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* one at Sharm el Sheikh farm on 17 March whilst in the autumn one at Taba, south Sinai, on 4th October and a peak of six at Sharm el Sheikh on 5 October where 2–3 between 4 and 6 October. Two **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* were reported on the island of Giftun Kebir, Hurghada, northern Red Sea, on 26 September. This will be the first occurrence for Egypt pending a full description being submitted. A claim of two **Basra Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus griseldis* at Hurghada in May 1994 is still outstanding but a further report of one on the Red Sea coast near Bir Ouei Mangrove, Safaga, on 8 May might well prove to be the first record for Egypt. An immature **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was at Sharm el Sheikh on 22nd September. A **Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* at Zaranik from 28 April to 1 May, was the fourth record. A **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* a rare winter visitor was at Alexandria on 12 November, and a **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* was at Sharm el Sheikh on 23 September *(all per OSME)*.

Ethiopia

A **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was seen near the HQ of Bale Mountains N. P. on 29 October. Three **Water Thicknees** *Burhinus vermiculatus* were seen between Filtu and Negele on 2 November. An immature **Piapiac** *Ptilostomus afer* seen in the company of **Stresemann's Bush-Crows** *Zavattornis stresemanni* (and cattle) between Arero and Yavello on 4 November was unusually far north. 45 **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* at Lake Abiata on 9 November was an unusually large number. Three **Ménétries' Warblers** *Sylvia mystacea* seen in Awash NP on 28 October may be new for the country as previous records were from Eritrea. Three **Salvadori's Serins** *Serinus xantholaema* were seen 30 km west of Filtu on 1 November, a new site for this restricted species *(all JH)*.

Gabon

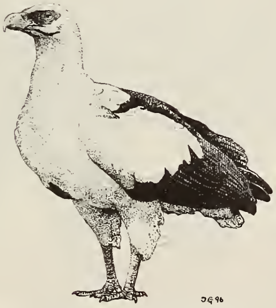
A male **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* moulting into summer plumage observed at Gamba on 13 and 26 January 1996 was the first record for the country *(GH)*.

The Gambia

A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was seen at Jahaly-Pachar on 28 November *(NB)*. A pair of **White-crested Tiger Herons** *Tigriornis leucolophus* attempted to breed at Tendaba in November/December *(NB et al.)*. Two new breeding localities for **White-backed Night-Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* were discovered in mangroves at Boro Kundy Forest Park and on the Allahien River in September, bringing the total of known breeding sites to six in 1996 *(per CB)*. A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* over Fatoto on 30 October was the first confirmed record since 1923 *(CB et al)*. A Lappet-faced Vulture over Sukuta on 21 December was the first recent coastal record *(CB et al)*, A pair of **Grasshopper Buzzards** *Butastur rufipennis* with three recently fledged young in Kiang West NP on 30 July was the first breeding record for The Gambia *(CB et al)*. Several **Buff-crested Bustards** *Eupodotis ruficrista* (of the form *savilei* sometimes given specific status), were seen and sound-recorded around Kaur on 10 September *(CB et al)*. A **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* was seen between Sotuma Sire and Alohungari on 29 November (NB). No less than 54 **White-headed Plovers** *Vanellus albiceps* were present at Kaur on 14 October *(CB et al)*. Three road-killed **Red-necked Nightjars** *Caprimulgus ruficollis* were found at 288 km W of Georgetown on 31 October, at Keneba on 22 November and Bansang on 22 December, these are the 2nd–4th records for The Gambia of a species which is little-known in West Africa *(per CB)*. A **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* was seen at Kunkilling Forest Park on 11 September, a new locality for the species *(CB et al)*. An adult and a well grown fledgling **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza forbesi* at Batelling on 23 December constitutes the first recorded breeding of the species in The Gambia *(per CB)*.

Kenya

Surveys carried out in Lambwe Valley, South Nyansa produced a number of unusual records for the area including 10 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* on 12 November, two **Common Button-quail** *Turnix sylvatica* on 13 November, single **Abyssinian Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus minor* on 12 September, and 10 and 11 November, single **Fawn-coloured Larks** *Mirafra africanoides* on 8 November and singing on 11 November, seven **African Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus caroli* at Olando on 11 September, and up to seven **Yellow-spotted Petronias** *Petronia pyrgita* seen regularly *(TS)*. An adult **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was at Busia on 19 September, while an adult **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was present at the Busia settling ponds on 17 September. Two **White-naped Ravens** *Corvus albicollis* were seen at Mbita Point Research Station on 24 August *(TS)*.



Palm-nut Vulture
Gypohierax angolensis
John Gale

Nigeria

An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was seen at Kwa Ibo Golf Course, Eket on 10–13 April 1996, earlier records for the country were not accepted but this well-photographed individual should constitute the first definite record for the country *(GH)*.

Senegal

A visit to Djoudj on 1 December produced a **Sun Lark** *Galerida modesta*, a male **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* and a male **Red-tailed Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*. A **Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* was seen at Seleti on the border with The Gambia on 25 November *(all NB)*.

Seychelles

A juvenile **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was found at Oceangate mudflats, Mahé in October (date unknown) and was present until at least 23 October. A **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* was on Frégate from 24–26 October and a **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* was on the same island from 25 October–1 November. A **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* was at Roche Caiman, Mahé from 13–15 November. A **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* was on Frégate 22–24 November while the **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* present on Frégate since 28 November 1995 was still there on 7 October 1996 *(all per R&VL)*.

Uganda

An **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* seen at Kibale on 27–28 October would appear to be the first Ugandan record if accepted*(TS)*. A **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* and four **Tiny Sunbirds** *Nectarinia minulla* at Buhoma on 13 August were both firsts for Bwindi/ Impenetrable NP *(NB)*. Two **Grey-throated Rails** *Canirallus oculeus* were seen well in Semliki NP on 21–22 July *(UO)*. A **White-naped Pigeon** *Columba albinucha* was seen in Semliki NP on 22 July *(UO)* and three were seen at Kibale Forest 8–9 August *(NB)*. A **White-crested Hornbill** *Tockus albocristatus* was reported from Semliki NP on 21 July *(UO)*. Two **Red-faced Barbets** *Lybius rubrifacies* were seen in Lake Mburo NP on 13 August *(BR SW)*, this very restricted species is rarely reported in recent years. An **African Green Broadbill** *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* was at Mubwindi Swamp, Bwindi/ Impenetrable NP on 9 August, what happens to this species at other times of year? *(RW et al)*

Records were collated by Iain Robertson from contributions supplied by Clive Barlow (CB), Nik Borrow/Birdquest (NB), Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME), John Gee (JG), Guus Hak (GH), John Hornbuckle (JH), Rob & Vicki Lucking (R&VL),Urban Olsson/Regulus Travel (UO), Barry Reed (BR), Valéry Schollaert (VS), Tony Stones (TS), Stephanie Tyler (ST), Richard Webb (RW) & Steve Webb (SW).

Erratum

The following photographs in the article on birding in Namibia's Caprivi Strip (*Bull ABC* 3(2): 105-128) were wrongly attributed. They should have been: Glossy Ibis (Kevin Bartlett), Red-billed Francolin (Kevin Bartlett), Southern Ground Hornbill (Kevin Bartlett), Lesser Moorhen (Kevin Bartlett). We apologise to the contributors concerned.

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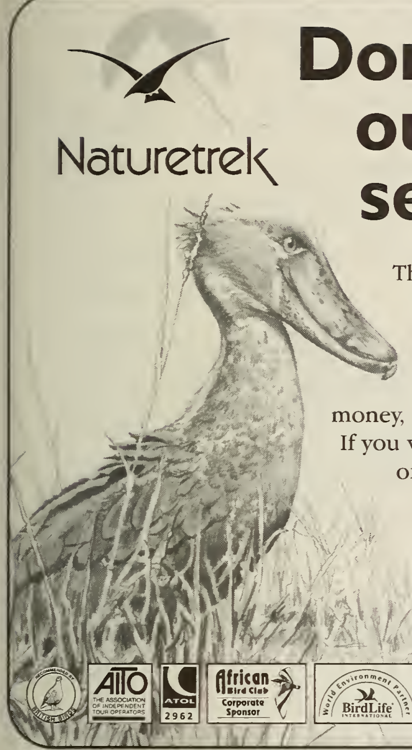

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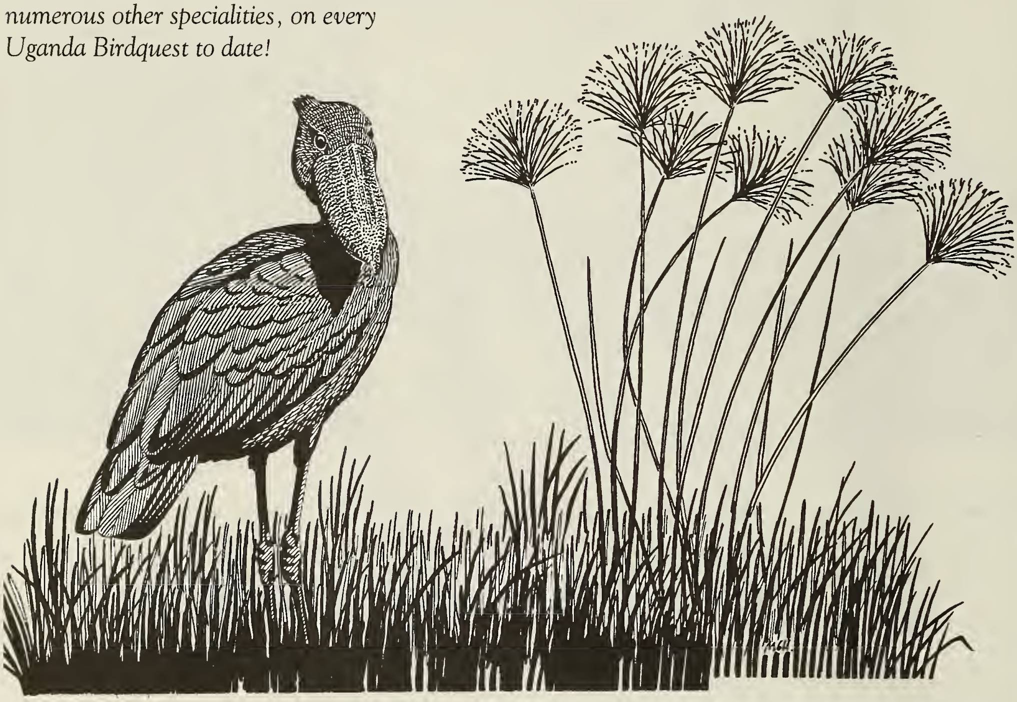

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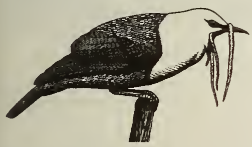

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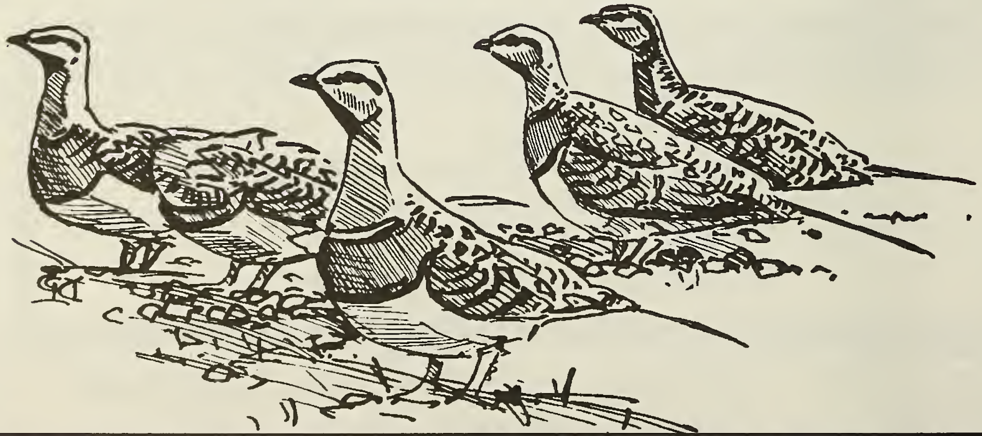

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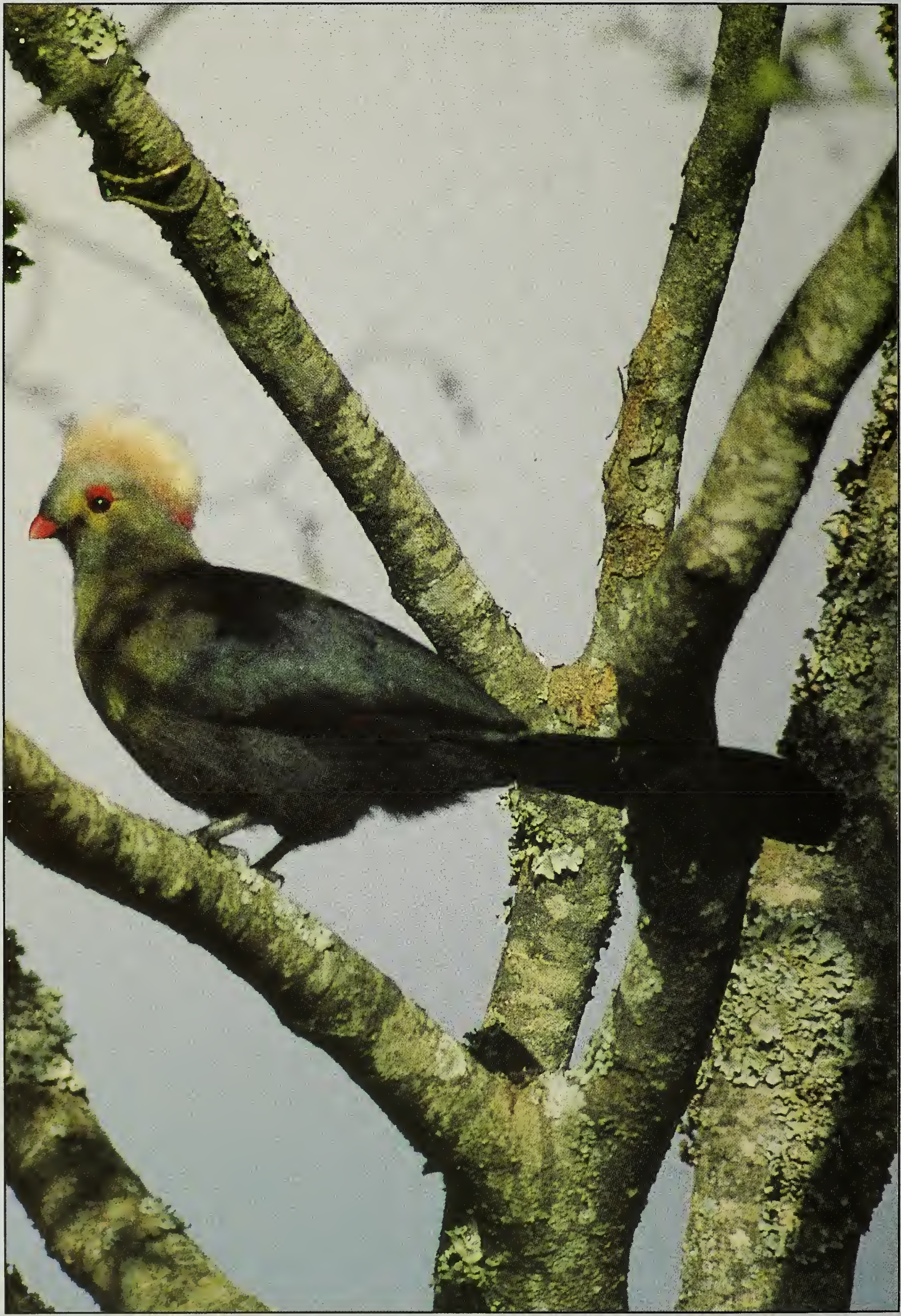

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* (Alan Greensmith)